ON TIPTOE

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

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A ROMANCE
OF THE REDWOODS

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"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"
SHE CRIED, TERROR-STRICKEN.

ON TIPTOE

A ROMANCE OF THE REDWOODS

BY

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY
THOMAS FOGARTY

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ON TIPTOE. II

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CHAPTER I

THE great Intelligences who work back of our ordered universe are obscure to us. They move without haste and in their own good time. Never are their faces revealed to us. We are aware of them by their deeds, by their shadowed reflections in men, by the interactions of their laws which never change. Nothing do we know and few things have we guessed of their intentions or the aim of their mighty progressions. At one extreme of our vision the primal ooze; at the other, men as we know them; beyond that the veil.

Nor clearly can we evaluate the means through which evolution advances. The moment ripens to transformation. What has been static, as permanent as the eternal hills, becomes at a pinpoint of time fluid. All life changes. Sometimes we perceive that moment appropriately and magnificently as the pomp of kings and wars. More often it never comes within our ken. Through a channel of the trivial, in the passing

moments of obscure lives, unappreciated, unconsidered, unnoticed it steals by. The great Intelligences have little care for relative values in men's eyes.

CHAPTER II

THIS is a swashbuckling story of pirate days. It has as leading characters the Buccaneer and his sinister Second in Command; the Fair Damsel in Distress; the Bright-Shining Hero; and those great Intelligences by whose caprice —or by whose ordered Law—our tiny world carries on among its millions of sister worlds. Follow and you shall see brave adventuring, and dastardly plots; and a fool exalted and cast down as his little affairs were swept into the mighty onward-flowing currents of Fate. So up-anchor and away!

At the moment our story opens the Pirate, who was appropriately named Grimstead, was leaning back in the stern-sheets of his craft smoking a cheroot and listening to the low-voiced conversation of his Second in Command. He was a large, square built, almost elderly man, with thick bushy eyebrows jutting over his eyes sternly like a pair of particularly heavy moustaches. Gardiner, the Second, was much younger and slenderer, dark in complexion, with clean shaven face and an inscrutable eye.

Neither of these men were paying the slightest attention to anything but each other. They left that to the man at the wheel. Indeed, the man at the wheel alone seemed to be at all aware of his surroundings; for the only other human being visible on the bobbing, careening craft was the Damsel in Distress, and she was completely occupied with her own thoughts, which seemed to be resentful and unpleasant. As beseemed her position in the story she was young and beauteous; indeed, most fair to look upon; and as beseemed the fortuity that she filled also the rôle of daughter to the Pirate Chief she was caparisoned in the most costly garments. The Bright-Shining Hero had not yet appeared.

Suddenly and most unexpectedly a loud *bang* sounded under the port quarter. The craft staggered, and a crash astern announced the fact that she was hit.

"What is it, Simmins?" cried the Pirate Chief, suddenly aroused. "Are we damaged?"

"Blowout, sir," replied Simmins sadly, opening the door and descending to the road.

He walked around to the rear of the car, and uttered an exclamation of dismay that had all the flavour of an oath.

"When she blew she slid into the rut and let us down pretty hard on one of these little stumps in the middle of the road," he answered

Grimstead's enquiry. "The gasoline's leaking."

Gardiner joined the chauffeur.

"It's buckled-in the tank," he announced briefly. "We're stuck."

"It's these damned foreign cars," cried Grimstead, "they don't give 'em enough clearance. Why in blazes any sane man buys one of these expensive fool things and then deliberately goes off on a trip into timber gets me. And I'm the man! I'm crazy! First one thing, then another, one after the other!"

The Damsel continued to look straight before her with uninterested lack-lustre eyes, but she opened her ruby lips in a filial but modern attempt to calm her parent.

"Now, dad," said she, "you're behaving like a spoiled child. You're the only one who wanted to come."

"Get something and save the gasoline!" commanded Grimstead.

"There isn't anything; and the gasoline is all run out," replied Gardiner calmly.

"For heaven's sake! Are we *stuck* in this God-forsaken place?" howled Grimstead.

"I'm afraid we are, chief."

Grimstead upheaved from the tonneau and descended to see for himself. He examined the damage carefully for a moment; then straightened up. His surface irritation had evaporated

in the face of a real situation; and the executive ability that had made him chief of the pirates came to the top.

"We're stuck, all right," he agreed, "and as far as I can remember we haven't passed another car on this road all day. That right, Simmins?"

"That's right, sir: except the stage."

"Is there a stage?"

"Yes, sir; runs to Tecolote: up one day, back the next."

"How far is it to help?"

"Nearest garage is about twenty miles. They might have something at Dennison's Mills. That's about fifteen miles; but it's off the main road."

"And it's now four o'clock," said Grimstead, looking at his watch. He considered a moment. "Well, there's only one thing for it. We're stuck for the night. There's probably enough grub in the lunch basket to keep us from starving. We'll just get organised and eat: and then Simmins can start out and hike for help. You can do it in seven or eight hours."

"It'll be dark, sir," suggested Simmins.

"You can take the flashlight."

"I don't rightly know the road, sir."

"According to the map it's the only road."

"Yes, sir," said the chauffeur doubtfully.

"I'd like a better place to camp in. Just like that damn foreign car to quit us in a place like this!"

"There's enough gas in the vacuum tank to take us a little way," suggested the chauffeur.

"By Jove, that's right!" cried Grimstead, whose spirits seemed to be rising to the adventure. "You change that tire, and we'll scout ahead a little. Come on, Gardiner!"

"Perhaps Simmins may want a little help," suggested Gardiner.

"All right. Want to go, Burton?"

The Damsel had also descended from the car and was seated on a stump by the roadside, staring straight ahead of her. "No, thanks," she replied indifferently, "it's dusty."

Grimstead threw his coat into the tonneau and tramped off up the grade between the scattered trees, a square, sturdy, vigorous figure that soon disappeared.

Next to be considered is the Damsel in Distress. Her distress was heartfelt but, from one point of view, not too serious. It consisted in the fact that she had been ravished away against her will: which is the usual and proper reason for the distress of females aboard pirate craft. Her will was not accustomed to be gone against. At this moment it would have decreed that she be listening to the dulcet strains

of Art Hickman's jazz orchestra at the St. Francis; or teaing—or teeing—at Pebble Beach; or mayhap bossing about one or more infatuated youths in any old haunt where sport clothes are correct and numerous. Instead of which she was here! Atop a stump! On a barren California hillside of high brush and an occasional tree! Stranded! Hot!! Uncomfortable!!! No wonder the lines of her figure were unbending: no marvel that her eyebrows were level and that the regard below them was—sullen? Out upon you! This damsel is young and beauteous. Smouldering is the word. And why not, prithee? Must we repeat that her will was not accustomed to be gone against? Are your public appearances so few that you have not encountered these princesses taking their toll of the world's courtesies; passing the policeman across the traffic, with a ravishing smile; slipping in at the head of the wearily waiting queue, with so gracious a bend of the head; usurping the club tennis court on men's day with so charming an ignorance or ignoring of rules; taking as the divine right of sex when young and well-dressed? Surely! And getting away with it. And perhaps you are one person in ten thousand and a philosopher, so that you are sorry for these poor little ornamental, charming princesses; seeing what mankind is doing to them

toward making them women first and human beings afterward, instead of the reverse.

Such a philosopher would have seen in the figure of Burton Grimstead, sulking on a stump, a sacrifice to men's ideas of caste and sex and all the rest of it. Of the remainder of the ten thousand, the younger half would have sympathised heartily with Burton, by gad! dragged off into the sticks right in the middle of the Del Monte Tournament: and the other half—us—would have muttered things about spoiled brats—first thing an indulgent father had ever asked her to do—can't give up a single one of her selfish pleasures, etc., etc.—and would have regretted that she was too old to be spanked.

And none of this would have affected Miss Burton in the least. She knew perfectly several things that neither the philosopher, nor her fellows, nor we could guess. When her father insisted, in face of her first careless refusal, that she join him on this trip into the backwoods, she was vastly surprised, but not greatly put out. Burton was fundamentally a sweet natured person. Only she couldn't make it out. He was always going off on these trips into the back of beyond; and he generally asked if she didn't want to go along. But she was by nature a civilised creature. Small country hotels did not appeal to her. After one experience she invari-

ably declined, and the refusal was accepted. But this time Grimstead said he particularly wanted her to go: indeed, he was going to *ask* her to go. There was not much to be said after that! not to the Pirate Chief! And then when at the last minute she found that this Gardiner person was to be in the party, she saw—and resented—it all. The Pirate Chief's diplomacy was Teutonic in its subtlety. Burton had met Gardiner before. She did not like him; and she did not care whether he was the Second in Command of the piratical craft, part keeper of the loot, principal deviser of stratagem, or not. From the moment Gardiner hove in sight, she resented the whole transparent affair bitterly. So you see there is something to be said for her after all.

Of course that depends a good deal on how well you like the Second in Command. There would seem to be no reason why you should not like him. He is tall, slender, very dark, with regular movie-queen dark eyelashes, a sleepy well-bred supercilious expression on his thin long face. All his movements are languidly graceful. He is exceedingly well-dressed. His ability is enormous. He knows all about electricity, and water power, and oil wells, and Diesel engines, and railroads, both theoretically and practically, for these things are some of the loot the Pirate

Chief has captured. In addition he is exceedingly well-informed on all the latest discoveries and inventions and theories of what makes our little world act as it does. Nor is he either a prig or a highbrow: but quite able to hold his own gracefully in any society. Burton said she didn't like him because he played no bridge nor golf: but that was not it. She had other reasons: —no, not reasons, instincts. Personally I think she was right; for I do not like him myself, although I am both old and a philosopher. But I am willing to extend him my sympathy as far as this particular expedition is concerned. He was not having a hilarious time; unless a worm is hilarious.

At the present moment he did not attempt to approach the aloof young goddess on the pedestal. Instead he gave needed assistance to the chauffeur. It was necessary to jack the car up very high in order to lift the wheel from the rut into which it had crashed: and then, after the tire had been changed, the rut had to be filled up. This took some time and a lot of hard sweating work. In spite of his elegant, almost foppish air, Gardiner took off his coat and worked as hard as Simmins; and when the job was finished, he was just as hot and dirty. There were qualities to the man, besides those necessary to boarding and scuttling.

By the time the job was finished the square heavy figure of Grimstead reappeared at the top of the hill and approached them down the dusty road. As soon as he was near enough he began heartily to shout encouraging remarks.

"Found a great place!" was the burden of his lay. "Couldn't be better! Wouldn't have missed it for a thousand dollars! Wait until you see!" and so on. Burton, with secret contempt, recognised a false note in the heartiness and joviality. He was trying to jolly her along: he was propitiating; he felt guilty; he was afraid of her; her consistent loftiness was beginning to get under his skin! With which reprehensible and unfilial thoughts hidden behind her cool, scornful, aloof demeanour, she descended from the stump and resumed her place in the car, bestowing no glance at either the silent, handsome Worm, or the guilty, voluble, fat Worm.

Simmins took the wheel, and the car started slowly up the grade. At the rounded summit Grimstead said:

"Shut her off, Simmins. It's all down hill from here."

The hum of the motor ceased. Silent as a shadow they glided around the corner of the mountain.

CHAPTER III

AS often happens at skylines in California, the nature of the country there changed. They had toiled up an open hillside of scattered trees and dense brush. They slid into an immense, cool, high forest, with dripping waters. The scale of things had been changed. This should have been the abode of giants. The trees were twenty feet thick and incredibly tall. The shafts were straight as columns, and through the Gothic windows, that here and there penetrated the dim high arches of their tops, struck slanting bands of milky light around which was transparent green shadow. In the upper region was a great simplicity, an absolute nirvanic stillness, and an incredible dim height.

Burton had seen redwood trees before, at Santa Cruz, and on the Russian River; and had been struck small by them, as is always the most careless visitor. But never had she seen one of the redwood forests of the north. The sullenness in her eyes was replaced by a startled, somewhat awed look. For here the columnar cathedral effect of the trees themselves was further supplemented by the growth beneath them.

The summit of the mountain they had crossed marked the dividing line between the damp sea-climate and the more arid interior. Here was abundance of moisture, and a deep rich humus. As a consequence the tiny road twisted through a soft padded chamber of green mosses, of high ferns. There were no harsh angles, no raw patches of earth: a thick velvet covering had been laid over every rock, over every fallen tree, and everywhere grew the gigantic feathery ferns in clumps, in patches; from the crevices in rocks; from tiny splits in the living trees; from the trunks and the upturned roots of the fallen giants. They were exactly like the bracken we see on the hillsides: only here they were eight or ten feet tall. With them too the scale had been increased. But especially wonderful were the upturned roots of fallen trees. Here the ferns had grown in wide-flung graceful masses; and the bright green moss had spread; so that the arched roots were like huge florists' baskets twenty feet high, ready to be lifted and carried away by their arching handles. It was incredible, unparalleled.

The earth of the road was damp, as though recently sprinkled: and the car glided along without a sound. To Burton's eyes it, and its contents, and the track on which it ran had suddenly been reduced to the dimensions and

importance of children's toys. It was of the class of details; and in this tremendous simplicity was no space for detail as yet. She hardly noticed the brilliant rhododendrons, the fringes of fragrant pink and white azaleas; nor did even the presence of tall foxgloves astound her—as yet. There were only the high, solemn trees; and the shafts of light slanting across them; and the huge gracious florists' baskets of ferns set among them; and the great reproving hush that seemed to dwell austerely as in a temple. And too there was a smell of sweet dampness, and a tinkle of innumerable small running waters.

The motor car coasted slowly for a half mile and came to where a little stream crossed beneath a bridge. Here a tiny patch of green had won for itself a tiny patch of unobscured sky. It was not over a hundred yards across; but it was bordered by pink azaleas in full bloom. The brook hurried along quietly, only muttering under its breath.

"Stop here, Simmins," Grimstead commanded. Somehow the fact that his voice sounded normally loud and audible surprised Burton. It seemed to her that it too should have been struck small. "How's that for a camp!" he cried triumphantly.

The car was brought to a standstill in the middle of the grass plot, and all debarked. Grim-

stead was loudly and bustlingly efficient. Gardiner, as usual, glided about like a languid and uninterested spectator, but he did a great deal. Simmins, quite cheered at doing something accustomed, hustled out the lunch basket and the thermos cases and proceeded to lay things out in seemly and proper style. Simmins was an engaging person, a creature of the moment. His light-hearted, gay and expansive disposition was warred upon sternly by his sense of correctness and good form. The natural self within him would have carried him through life skiptiously, like the giddy goat; but it wasn't done, you know. He loved, simply adored playing up to his part, which was solemn, eminently correct, terrifically imposing, and he could do it in such a manner as to dash or make self-conscious all but the drunkest or most conventional. All the while his reprehensible, natural self was watching him delightedly, hardly able to hold itself down in its enthusiasm over the complete success of the performance. When at home Simmins became a house man. In this capacity the one fatal misfortune of his professional career overtook him. Burton, unseen herself, had witnessed his answering of the door bell. He came down the hall cakewalking, a wonderful double shuffle, snapping his fingers, his head thrown back, his eyes closed; but all quite noiseless. Before

opening the door he made it a wonderful ballerina curtsey, spreading the tails of his coat wide. Then he turned the door knob and instantaneously a wonderful transition took place. Wooden as a nutmeg he looked ten million miles into space, his elbows snapped out at an angle, and his inflexible sing-song voice declaimed impersonally that he could not say, madame, but that he would ascertain. O fatal day! Next time he tried to come it over Burton, as usual, he ran against a snag.

"Look here, Simmins," she said decidedly. "I wish you'd come off the perch and be human. I like friendly looking people about me."

"Sorry, Miss," said he non-committally in his best manner. "I was not aware of giving offence. It is pawsibly the results of my training, miss."

Simmins was enjoying himself thoroughly. He knew just when to put the accents and yet avoid impertinence. It was his last shot. The next instant he exploded with a loud report, due to a bomb cast accurately into his midst. Miss Burton had seen! He gathered up his pieces and retreated in disorder. For a long time his world was in chaos. He never did quite recover the integrity of his attitude toward Miss Burton. It wasn't done, you know; but he rather liked it.

So now he solemnly spread the cloth and laid

out the utensils and the food. Simmins would not at all relish the general situation—stranded in a wilderness—but he did not stop to think of the general situation. All he bothered with was the fact that the lunch basket was very correct, the appointments were very correct; and the hushed and reverential atmosphere of these huge overarching trees was worthy of any butler, superlatively correct.

After the food had been properly arranged he drew away to survey his handiwork. He paused to pluck a handful of azaleas with which he garnished the corners of the cloth. Then he drew himself erect.

"Supper is served, sir," he announced.

It was absurd: but it was sublime. All three of the travellers recognised the fact as they came to take their places. Gardiner looked with awe upon the wooden figure standing at attention; Grimstead stared; Burton cast a fleetingly mocking glance that missed by a thousand miles.

"Now this is a real adventure!" cried Grimstead heartily. He was still uncertain as to the mood with which his offspring was meeting said adventure; whether she considered it a lark, or all his fault; and like most fatuous old Pirates who think nothing of cutting a throat or two, he was abject toward the essentially unimportant attitude of his own womenfolk. "We might

be a lot worse off! Plenty of food; and hot drink; and a warm night! We've made out worse than this; haven't we, Gardiner, my boy?"

The young man smiled faintly but did not answer. He saw that a reply would have no effect on Burton: and to his employer it was superfluous.

By now the afternoon was drawing to its close. The shafts of milky light had lifted, like wands, and had disappeared. Only the occasional top of a tree was still warmly gilded, as indication that the sun had not yet set. From the earth had arisen together a twilight and a coolness that flowed between the bases of the mighty tree trunks. Already the details of the gigantic fern growths, and the florists' baskets, and the deep dark vistas, and all the tracery of shrubs and flowers were quietly blending into a monotone of indistinctness. It rose inch by inch, like a mist; while still the clear sunlight shone hundreds of feet above. And from this dimness came the clear, spaced, mellow, cathedral-like bell-tones of the Hermit Thrush's song: deliberate as an immemorial ritual.

"I think myself it is chilly," Burton suddenly interrupted the men's low-voiced conversation.

They sprang to their feet and began to search out dry wood for a fire.

"No, no, Simmins," commanded Grimstead, "you eat your supper and clear up as promptly as you can. We'll attend to this."

They built a fire; and they brought cushions and robes from the car, and settled Burton comfortably. It did not occur to either of them to wonder why they should be going to these extraordinary exertions, physical and moral, to please an able bodied human being so much younger than themselves. When this was arranged, Grimstead looked around for Simmins. The latter had finished his meal, and was bestowing the remainder of the food and the utensils. In this he was consuming just as much time as he possibly could. Grimstead watched him for a few moments in silence.

"Simmins," he said at last, "I think we can stagger through to-morrow if the nickel plate on that thermos is not polished like new. Drop all that and come here."

"Yes, sir," replied Simmins. He managed to impart an air of verisimilitude to several minor operations that consumed several minutes; but at length approached and stood with his elbows cocked out.

"It is now six o'clock," stated Grimstead. "I find by the road map that Tecolote is twenty and three-tenths miles distant on a straight road.

By walking three miles an hour you should get there by one o'clock, or thereabouts. The map says there is a garage. Have a car come at once for us. It should be here by two-thirty at latest. You will come back with it and be prepared to stay here until we can send out a new tank or a tow car."

"Yes, sir," hesitated Simmins.

"Well, start along."

"Beg your pardon, sir; but I am not certain of keeping the road, sir. It seems to me probable that I might go astray. That would be annoying, most annoying; to you, sir, of course, for in that event I would be unable to meet our engagement, sir. If I might suggest waiting for daylight—"

"Any born fool can stay on a plain road," growled Grimstead. "That's nonsense. Just follow the ruts with your flashlight."

"With the flashlight, oh, indeed, sir; quite so, sir. But on examination I find that the flashlight is not working, sir."

"Not working! Let's see it!"

Simmins handed it over and stepped back. Grimstead tried it, then took it apart and peered into it.

"Here, Gardiner, take a look. I can't see by this cussed firelight," he said after a moment.

"The inside connection is gone," was Gardiner's diagnosis, "broken square off; fresh break too. That's strange! How could that get broken?"

"Couldn't say, sir," replied Simmins, meeting the combined shock of both men's stares. He meant he wouldn't say.

"Well," said Grimstead reluctantly. "It will take all night to get anywhere at all in these dark woods—if he didn't get lost or break a leg."

The faintest gleam crossed Simmins' eyes. Burton, leaning back idly, apparently as remote as the pyramids, saw it.

"I have a flash of my own in my bag," she announced.

Simmins flickered a reproachful eye at her. Since the debacle of the front door episode a certain human relationship had existed between these two. But he was to suffer for his sex.

"I shall do my best, sir," said he meekly, for Simmins, "but it is only fair to say, sir, that the boots I am wearing, being purchased afar from my customary tradesman, and being of inferior fit as well as inferior workmanship and material, have had for some days the effect, sir—"

"God bless my soul, what are you driving at!" cried Grimstead.

"Simmins is funking it," interposed Burton coolly. "He's afraid a bear or a panther or a

wolf will jump out from a dark corner just as he rounds a bend in the road, and with one spring will fasten its fangs in the back of his neck."

"Nonsense!" exploded Grimstead.

"Quite so, sir," supplemented Simmins, but without conviction.

"Or that it will drop out of the branches of a tree over his head, *swoosh!*"

"Wolves do not climb trees, miss," put in Simmins respectfully, hoping to change the discussion. This was exactly what he was afraid of, however.

"There's not one earthly thing in these woods that would hurt anybody," stated Grimstead decidedly, "and we've wasted time enough. If you'll get Simmins your flash, my dear, he'll be getting along."

Ignoring Simmins' question as to which bag she wanted, Burton arose and went to the car.

"Here it is, Simmins," she said, after a moment's fumbling. "They say wild animals are afraid of light, so I fancy you'll be perfectly safe; unless of course the battery gives out. I hardly know what to advise then. They say if you can lie perfectly still, so the beast thinks you are dead, he won't touch you. You might try that."

Simmins made no reply as he took the torch:

but he did not attempt to veil the hurt reproach in his eyes. Slowly he walked to the damp soft road, down which he slowly disappeared; a Lilliputian figure in the dusk of the gigantic trees.

CHAPTER IV

BEFORE we follow Miss Burton back to her fireside let us accompany for a short distance the excellent but reluctant Simmins. His way almost immediately took him out of sight of the firelight. The various and vague night influences that firelight always holds at bay immediately gathered close about and jeered him. They informed Simmins inaudibly but most plainly that he was nothing but an insignificant little flunkey; that he was a frivolous unworthy character; that his general all around uselessness was but poorly compensated by a light-mindedness which he had mistakenly labelled cheer-o. Having impressed these, and various other similarly depressing truths on him; and having filled his soul to overflowing with the awe, the portent, the whelming aloofness of twilight forest, they sprung a screech owl on him.

The screech owl is one of the smallest of the *raptores,* or birds of prey. It lives on little mice and buggums of convivial night-prowling habits; and its capacity for harming anything larger than a canary bird is extremely doubtful. But it does not sound that way. Perched aloft

in comfortable seclusion it utters the shrieks, screams, whoops and obscene chucklings of a thousand devils, and that in a voice so powerful that naturalists have never determined why the recoil does not knock it off its perch. There ought to be an Indian legend to the following effect: In the Beginning of Creation the God of Four-footed Creatures and the God of Feathered Creatures had a contest to see which could make the worst sounding product. The legend should then run four pages full of words like *matchagewiss* in italics; the gist of which would be that the God of Four-footed Creatures made the coyote and set him on a hill; and as every one knows one coyote is some diabolical singer! But the God of Feathered Creatures spit on his hands and made a screech owl and stuck him in a tree; and he had the other God skinned a mile.

Simmins had never heard a screech owl. Neither had he ever heard a bear, a wolf, a panther, a hippogriff, a pterodactyl or a bandersnatch. His worst fears were realised. Panic-stricken he stood stark still and cast the beams of his searchlight all about him. They were most unsatisfactory, for they made a faint hollow blub in the obscurity directly in front, and left a pressing blackness all around. Simmins hesitated. The next instant he was on his knees alongside the road hastily gathering the

materials for a fire. He was no Boy Scout and it took him half a box of matches to get going; but at last the cheerful friendly little blaze licked up through the fuel. Simmins sat in front of it, all thought of his duty shamelessly abandoned. The screech owl, intrigued by the firelight, came over to a nearer tree. It had eaten a shrew and so had no pressing business on hand. At occasional intervals it made conversational reports of its operations to another screech owl, a friend, now cruising on a ridge about three miles distant. Whenever this happened Simmins sprang hastily from his doze and piled on more fuel.

CHAPTER V

BURTON returned to the fireside carrying a small covered basket. She sat down and removed the contents.

I have been afraid to tell you of this basket before, and of the fifth member of the party, because I did not want to prejudice you against my heroine. She is a good heroine, really; good looking, good disposition at bottom, bright, clever, lots of feminine lure, and a sense of humor—top hole in every respect. I know you'll like her when you know her. But she is young, and she's been raised a pet, and she has a few silly little foibles that go with her age and her station in life. Those are the things people outgrow and laugh about later. The thing she took out of the basket was a Pomeranian dog, half size even for that breed, and it was named Punketty-Snivvles. There you have it!

Punketty-Snivvles was an arrant and arrogant snob, vain as a peacock, addicted to almost incessant shrill noise, impudent to his largers and scornful of his betters. He was a mamma's darling, pink-ribbon creature, with an aggres-

sively demanding disposition. Every creature, we are told, has its mission in life. Punketty-Snivvles' mission was in all probability the humbling of self-righteousness. Many a Christian minister who had put away all earthly passions; many a New-Thoughter who had long since got over thinking of anything more detailed than the All; many a disciple of Sweetness and Light as applied to Hindu Health who habitually contemplated only Buddha's navel, or something like that, was brought rudely to a vulgar carnal desire to wring Punketty-Snivvles' neck! From which common human meeting ground, I do not doubt, they worked slowly back to Better Things.

Punketty-Snivvles, released from his basket, promptly stood on his hind legs and walked, strutted, back and forth to be admired. The men surveyed the creature in silent disgust. Burton adoringly fed it slices of chicken she had saved out for the purpose. Punketty-Snivvles showed its appreciation by uttering staccato and incessant barks. This he kept up just long enough to drive the great peaceful gods of the forest evening to distant ridges; and then he curled up in a small fluffy ball next the fire and went to sleep.

It took the great peaceful gods some little time to make up their minds to come back; but at

length they ventured, and night once more brooded over the forest.

Burton reclined on the cushions, looking straight up, still within her inscrutable silence. Gardiner was clever enough to realise that this was the time for effacement. Grimstead dozed. Directly overhead was a little patch of the sky with stars. Toward it reached the sparks from the fire; at first shooting up straight and flaming; then hesitating, eddying, dulling; finally making a last upward dart to die in the blackness. They started out a hundred, a thousand strong; there ended but two or three; yet ever new hundreds, new thousands sprang up joyously to replenish the ascending column and as soon to die. Around, the trees watched in mute solemnity; above, the remote stars hung in the awful void. Burton's eyes widened and the tight drawn bands of convention and youth loosened; so that unknown to her the hidden spirit within her reached out into its own element, and bathed in it and was glad.

But now the peace of the night was broken by the approach of something metallic and loose. Three of the watchers sat up. Punketty-Snivvles did not stir. The thing coming was evidently a car: and the tinny rattle betrayed its plebeian origin. Punketty-Snivvles paid little attention to anything beneath the rank of

a Rolls-Royce or a Pierce-Arrow. But some of his humans were not so certain.

"Can't hear any engine," puzzled Gardiner; "must be horse drawn—a wagon load of milk cans."

"Coasting," suggested Grimstead.

"Up hill from that direction," pointed out Gardiner.

But the doubt was almost immediately resolved by the dancing glare of headlights through the trees, and an instant later a small light car swerved off the road and came to a stop. Enter the Bright-Shining Hero!

The thing he rode was one of those nondescript home-made things of galvanised iron by which the youthful attempt in vain to disguise and render sportful a certain otherwise jokeful brand of inexpensive car. The hood was wide arched and continued back to a cowl that in its turn so nearly enveloped the single seat as to resemble a cockpit. The rear ran out into a peak, like a cigar, so that the terrific speed would not create a dangerous vacuum. For an analogous reason the superfluity of fenders and running board had been stripped off. If one wanted to board this clipper, he had to swing himself over a high gunwale, for there were no doors. At this moment the craft was in heavy cruising order, for the long, lean racing lines

were disfigured by a huge canvas-covered pack, lashed on her stern. One could imagine, however, that should occasion arise, a few deft slashes of a keen-edged knife would jettison all this heavy freight, leaving her stripped for action, prepared to leap forward to her full thirty-five miles per hour in pursuit of derring-do! It is to be regretted that long absence from her dry dock had apparently loosened enough of her rivets so that temporarily her disguise was rendered nought by a rattle as characteristic as the radiator she had borne from the factory.

The occupants of this craft were three. The young man at the wheel, as he showed in the firelight, was a pleasant-faced youth, with short, light hair, and what had been a fair complexion dark-reddened by much exposure. He had a pair of laughing eyes and a fine flash of teeth in his contagious grin. Behind him, seated atop the canvas-covered pack, was an Irish terrier dog, balancing himself in a difficult position with the nonchalance of expert habit. The third occupant was Simmins.

Before his employers could recover from their astonishment at his reappearance, Simmins leaped nimbly from the cockpit.

"This gentleman picked me up, sir," said he glibly, "and I conceived as how it would be more expeditious, sir, to come back with him."

"More expeditious! He's going in the other direction!" said Grimstead.

Simmins' agile mind saw the point, and realised that if this young man were supposed to have offered his services in going for help, there would have been no earthly object in returning to the fire. He would simply have turned around and headed for Tecolote. As a matter of fact it was only when the little car came to a stop that Simmins awoke to the fact that he had to say anything at all. The terror of that wolf-cougar-bear-pterodactyl-bandersnatch-screech-owl combination had completely benumbed his faculties. When the young man had pulled up and said "Hop aboard," he had hopped aboard, utterly unaware even that he had said that yes, he was going that way.

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir," he answered Mr. Grimstead's remark. "But, sir, although our tank is ruined, sir, it occurred to me that by filling the vacuum tank by hand every few miles we would be able to work our car to Tecolote, sir, in not over two hours. The vacuum tank holds approximately a quart, which should take us two and a half miles. Thus by filling the tank nine times we should arrive. It might be a little slow, sir, to be sure; but we should be in within two hours, and that would be much more expeditious. We would have to borrow from this

gentleman only about two and a half gallons of gasoline. I hope I have done right, sir," ended Simmins virtuously.

He managed by his manner to convey the impression that all those details had been considered and discussed with his new companion. As a matter of fact Simmins was spinning it out as he went along. The chief idea was to bring up fresh and interesting issues so that the fact that he had been found huddling over a fire instead of tramping manfully along the road to Tecolote should become too trivial to mention. Simmins was the best two-handed liar in America because he could hit from any position at any time. If he had been awakened from a sound sleep and confronted with forgotten evidence he would without a pause have started off in an explanation so plausible, connected and self-evident that the end would have been an abject apology for disturbing his rest. Of course there is nothing immoral about lying like that: morality has nothing to do with great Art. Naturally, then, Simmins realised perfectly there was one weak point in his discourse, and he had his reinforcements ready if needed; but that contingency seemed unlikely.

"Quite right, Simmins; quite right," Grimstead was saying.

But Miss Burton stirred; and Simmins' muscles tightened.

"I suppose this gentleman has that much gasoline to spare," she threw in, apparently idly.

That was the weak point. Simmins, naturally, did not know.

"He offered his assistance, Miss," he replied stiffly. After all you had to have *some* luck; and by the size of his camp pack he must be on an extended cruise.

During this short colloquy the young man had sat at the wheel, his twinkling eyes leisurely appraising the party. Grimstead approached.

"It is very good of you to help us," said he politely.

A fleeting expression of puzzlement swept the newcomer's brow; but he answered with equal courtesy.

"Glad to be of any assistance."

And waited.

Burton caught the puzzlement; and instantly looked toward Simmins in time to capture the tail end of entreaty directed toward the youth.

"Simmins," said Grimstead, "have we sufficient receptacles?"

"I'm afraid not, sir. The canvas bucket would hardly do."

"Perhaps," Grimstead addressed the young man, "you could also let us have a utensil?"

"What sort of a utensil?" enquired the stranger. He was enjoying himself; but he could not yet make out the situation. His roving eye caught a look in Simmins' that plainly begged circumspection, and a flash of amusement from the pretty girl in the flowered toque.

"A pail would do, I should think," Grimstead was answering him, "something that would hold about two and a half or three gallons."

"All right, I have such a pail. You can have it," and waited again.

"And perhaps a funnel, if it would be possible," put in Simmins hastily. "The vacuum tank would be very hard to fill without a funnel."

The young man considered this statement for some moments.

"Is your gas tank badly damaged?" he asked at length.

Simmins' heart lifted up in an inner pæan of joy. This was an intelligent young man who could draw an intelligent inference. Saved again! The yardarm would swing empty at dawn!

Grimstead detailed the accident. The young man nodded comprehension.

"I see. It's too bad, but I have no gas," he announced calmly.

"I thought, sir," struck in Simmins eagerly, "that the young man would be willing to loan

it to us and might wait here, as he has camp equipment, until we could send him out a supply from Tecolote; especially, sir, on account of getting Miss Burton in out of the night air." Confound the fellow: what did he mean, taking chances away off here in the wilderness without a reserve supply of fuel.

"Your solicitude for me is very thoughtful," put in Burton sweetly. "Thank you, Simmins."

"I'd gladly let you have it, of course," said the young man, "if I had it; but I haven't."

"But you must have *some!*" cried Simmins, routed from his grand manner.

"Not a single drop," smiled the newcomer.

"Well, distillate, alcohol, kerosene, whatever it is," said Grimstead a little impatiently. "My car will run on them at a pinch."

"Not a single drop," repeated the man; "I run on—well, electricity."

"Electricity!" cried Grimstead and Gardiner in unison. "Where do you—"

But the technical discussion was sidetracked. The Irish terrier, who had been sitting atop the pack, watching everything with bright eyes, suddenly saw something that interested him. He riveted his gaze on the ball of long black hair at Burton's feet. The thing looked like one of these muffs lady Humans liked to carry; but the Irishman thought it had stirred. After a mo-

ment he was sure of it. With instantaneous decision he went into action.

So quick and unexpected were his movements that he had covered the distance between himself and Punketty-Snivvles, had seized that personage, and was halfway back to his master before the bystanders realised what was taking place.

"Good *heavens!*" cried Burton. "Call off your dog! He'll kill him!"

Grimstead and Gardiner scrambled to their feet. Simmins stooped and picked up a handy club. But the young man was laughing.

"Stand still! Don't worry!" he commanded. "He won't hurt him!" And somehow they believed, and stood still. After a moment Grimstead and Gardiner too began to laugh; and even Simmins permitted himself a discreet smile.

The Irish terrier was retrieving Punketty-Snivvles, carefully, just as a hunting dog retrieves a bird. He had the unfortunate personage very completely in his mouth so that one end stuck out one side and the other end out the other side. His head was high, his step was proud, and his eye was the eye of one who does conscientiously a rather unpleasant duty. For Punketty-Snivvles was having wriggling hysterics and screaming billingsgate in no uncertain tones.

"Bring it here, Rapscallion," the young man

commanded, at the same time descending from the car.

The terrier deposited his burden in his master's hand and drew back, spitting and sneezing in his relief at getting rid of so much long hair.

"Come here, you old idiot," ordered his master. "This is a dog. I know it doesn't look it; but smell of it. You see," he explained, looking up, "I am naturally of a lazy but curious disposition, so I have trained Rapscallion to bring me in anything strange or queer he runs across in the woods as long as it isn't skunks. But he ought to know a dog when he smells it!"

Punketty-Snivvles had continued his screams.

"Oh, shut up!" the young man addressed him unceremoniously. "You're not hurt a hair;" and then, as Punketty-Snivvles continued his ravings, he cuffed the atom smartly. Simmins gasped audibly. Never before had Punketty-Snivvles felt the hand of authority. He glanced at Miss Burton to see how she was going to take this outrage. She was staring at the young man with a very queer look in her face. But Punketty-Snivvles did shut up.

"If you have quite finished punishing my dog, will you kindly return me my property?" she asked coldly, after a moment.

"Why, certainly," acquiesced the young man, his features lighting up with an engaging smile,

and stepping forward with the atom of fur outstretched, "Do you really care for this?"

And then a queer thing happened. Burton opened her mouth, intending to squelch this upstart in one of a half dozen ways, carefully selected by an unerring feminine instinct. But as she looked up straight into his carelessly laughing eyes something ingenuously expectant in the depths of them caused her to say, with considerable emphasis, not to say passion:

"No, I hate and despise it!"

"I thought you would," responded the young man in sympathetic tones. "Well, great is the power of fashion. Here, Simmins," he ordered, "take this nuisance away somewhere. You ought to get you a real dog. Here, Rapscallion: you've got to apologise to the lady. First show her your paws are clean."

The solemn, fuzzy Irishman came forward gravely, sat erect, and extended his forelegs stiffly straight up either side his head.

"She's a pretty lady," stated the newcomer brazenly, "smile at her."

The dog wrinkled his upper lips back from his teeth in a most engaging grin.

"Now speak to her in apology," with a slight emphasis on the word "speak."

"Now see if she'll forgive you and shake hands."

Rapscallion extended his right paw, keeping the other still rigidly elevated. Nobody could have resisted him. Burton did not.

"You darling!" she cried, dropping on her knees before him. The terrier rolled his wistful brown eyes toward his master.

"All right, Rap," said the latter.

The terrier came down to all fours and submitted in dignified manner to the blandishments of the pretty lady.

"I could give you the address of the man who breeds 'em," suggested the newcomer.

"Oh, would you?" cried Burton, looking up.

CHAPTER VI

AT this moment Grimstead's booming tones broke in.

"Young man," said he, "I do not know who you are, nor how you do it; but if you have made a permanent cure you can name your own fee. I've felt at times that no price was too high to pay for riddance from that damn yapping—"

But Burton had no intimation of being put upon. She resumed her egg-shaped aura and from it cast upon her parent One Look.

"But it's getting later every minute," put in the latter hastily. "We'd better get down to business. You said, I believe, you ran on electricity? Hadn't any gas?"

"That's right," smiled the young man.

"Well, it's an imposition, I know; but you see how we are situated. Could you drive back to Tecolote and get us help?" Grimstead hesitated, casting a glance first at the young man, then at his car. "Of course I'd—that is, we'd fix it up—"

"Surely; I'll do anything I can," agreed the young man heartily. "My name is Davenport."

"Grimstead is mine. That's fine! Get them to send out a touring car to-night; and then to-morrow we can make arrangements for repairs."

But Davenport shook his head doubtfully.

"Not to-night," he decided. "To-morrow."

Grimstead flushed.

"It would be rather a hardship on my daughter—" he began stiffly, "and of course we should expect you to consider yourself as our guest at Tecolote—"

Davenport laughed aloud.

"Bless you: I don't mind the being out late! That's an old trick of mine. But it's going to rain; and it's going to rain hard. I probably wouldn't make it, and you'd all be very wet and uncomfortable."

"Rain!" cried Grimstead, astounded.

"Rain!" cried Gardiner contemptuously.

"Rain!" echoed Burton incredulously.

"The wind's due north, and has been all day," Grimstead pointed out, "and, besides, it's the dry season."

"I saw the weather map this morning. There's no low area within two thousand miles. The barometer is up," said Gardiner.

"Look at the stars! It's a heavenly night," contributed Burton.

"Apparently that is so," smiled Davenport. "Nevertheless we are in for a storm, and a very

heavy one. I think it would be better for me to wait here until morning and help make you comfortable. I have a camp outfit; and plenty of supplies."

"Of course you must suit yourself," said Grimstead coldly. There was no doubt in his mind that this young man much preferred the company of a pretty girl by a fire, not to speak of a good night's sleep, to slamming about bad mountain roads in the dark.

"I suppose," said Gardiner sarcastically, "that you can tell us just when it's going to start to rain and how many inches we will have."

"I might," replied Davenport unexpectedly. "Wait a minute."

He stood upright and stared off into space. The bright intelligence of his eyes drained slowly away, leaving them glinting only with surface reflections of the fire, as though they had been made of glass. The others watched him, puzzled, and a little impressed with this evidence of what seemed extreme inner concentration. He stood thus for perhaps half a minute; then slowly his eyes reconcentrated.

"It will begin to rain about one or one-thirty," he stated quietly, "and will continue for eight hours and twenty minutes—or five minutes either way. I could not tell you exactly how many

inches will fall; but it will be a very heavy and continuous downpour with high wind—a tempest. On a guess for that sort of a storm, lasting that long, five inches."

"Five inches! A cloudburst!" Gardiner snorted.

"Yes, this is a bad storm," agreed Davenport seriously. "Another thing: that tree just beyond your car, the one near the edge of the road, will be blown down, so we'd better move the car, and be careful where we pitch camp."

Gardiner muttered contemptuously to himself. Grimstead merely smiled a sardonic smile. He was by now quite accustomed to Burton's effect on young men. They always showed off in one way or another. This was a new way to show off; but anything to attract her attention. He had it now.

"How do you claim to know these things so accurately?" demanded Burton bluntly.

"Suppose we wait until morning and see if I *do* know them," smiled Davenport.

"Yes, that's a good idea," approved Grimstead drily. "And if we really are to stay here all night, suppose we see what we can do toward making ourselves comfortable."

He glanced aloft at the still, sweet night and smiled under his moustache.

Davenport began to unlash the pack on his little car. Simmins stepped forward to help him.

"That's all right, my merry man," said Davenport, "but I can handle this. Suppose you rustle out what you've got in the way of rugs, cushions and stuff of that sort. We'll just pool our resources. Here," he summoned Gardiner, "catch hold and help spread this out."

Gardiner hesitated, then obeyed. In a few moments Davenport was surveying the pile of effects with a speculative eye. There proved to be a small tent made of some light paraffined material; a heavy canvas tarpaulin that had covered the whole; two pair of camp blankets; a quilted sort of bag affair that could be used either as a mattress or as a sleeping bag in very cold weather; three carriage rugs; and a folding cot. To these, at Davenport's command, were added four long heavy overcoats.

"We'll make out," he decided. "Miss Grimstead gets the tent, of course; and we'd better put that up first. It's a simple affair. You put it up, Brother Simmins. Ever put up a tent before?"

"I fought in the Boer War, sir," said Simmins unexpectedly. After the brief glow of glory this announcement evoked, Simmins was a little sorry he had made it, for it committed him irrev-

ocably to an unassisted struggle. He lifted the mess of material and little meaningless ropes.

"Where shall I—ah—pitch it, sir?" he enquired. That word pitch was a good thought; sounded professional.

"Get just as far down the meadow as you possibly can," directed Davenport, "but stay out in the open. Don't get into the woods. Better build a fire to give yourself light."

"But why so far away?" protested Grimstead. "I should prefer to have my daughter a little nearer."

"Oh, of course we'll move down there too," said Davenport carelessly, rummaging in the torpedo stern of the little car. "Here's a hatchet, Simmins, and a few iron pegs; but cut some good long stakes for the corners. These iron things are too short."

"But why not stay here where all our things are?" persisted Grimstead.

"Not safe," mumbled Davenport, his head in the car. "That one tree is the only one that will fall; but a fellow can't guess at heavy limbs that might get broken loose. The wind will come from the sou'west, and that will make it blow lengthwise down the meadow. If we go to the lower end we'll not get hit with falling branches, at least."

Grimstead rolled his eyes at Gardiner with

a comical grin. The Pirate Chief was in reality a soft old thing when it came to anything that had to do with his only che-ild. This young man was carrying his bluff through, anyhow; and Grimstead liked a good consistent sport. But Gardiner had other ideas.

"He's crazy as a loon," he said aside to his chief.

"Well," pointed out the older man, without contesting this point, "he's got a tent and a cot and some warm bedding; not to speak of a car that runs. If he makes Burton comfortable, I don't care how crazy he is."

"Let's go!" cried Davenport cheerily, emerging from his search with a little shovel, a ball of heavy twine, and a short axe. He gathered up the tarpaulin and the blankets. "Bring along the rest of the plunder. Give us a lead with the flashlight, Miss Grimstead."

They made their way to the lower end of the meadow, where Simmins' fire gleamed. Simmins was apparently playing a game with himself that much resembled a gentleman trying to find the right-side-up of a lady's evening wrap.

"This tent seems to be of a pattern unknown to me," he announced accusingly, "not at all like the British army tent, if I may say so, sir."

"You may!" laughed Davenport, "and you

certainly will tell the truth. Here, you tie the ends of these ropes to two trees—these will do —and you haul them up as tight as you can. That's the boy! Now you see which are the corners, don't you? Well, stretch 'em out and peg 'em down. Looks like a tent now, doesn't it? Cut some stakes, as I told you, and peg her down some more."

He looked about him.

"I guess that down log yonder is our best bet," he announced. He gathered up the tarpaulin and the hand axe. "You can come with me and throw me a light," he ordered Burton, "and you two men get out and rustle dry bracken for a bed. Loads of it, plenty of it! It packs down more than balsam, remember; so get a regular old hayload, if you want to save your bones. I'll rig a tent of the tarp."

"But I'd as soon sleep out as not," objected Grimstead.

"I tell you you'd get wet," repeated Davenport with a touch of impatience.

Grimstead threw up both hands in mock despair. Gardiner smiled tolerantly and made a circular gesture before his forehead. Davenport's back was turned; but Burton saw. A slow colour mounted to her cheeks, and she stepped forward promptly with the flashlight. The young man began skilfully to construct a

lean-to shelter, using the down tree as a back wall. Burton watched interestedly, for the affair was most workmanlike and ingenious. She exclaimed with delight over the simple expedient of wrapping small stones in the corners of the tarpaulin in order to have something unslippable to which to tie the guy lines.

"I hope it *does* rain!" she remarked defiantly to the world in general. She sat on a small hummock pointing the torch. The young man made a very attractive focus to the light. His wiry, strong figure showed well beneath the loose out-of-door garments; and his pleasant face, sobered by the concentration on his task, was attractively steadfast and kindly. He flickered up at her remark.

"Oh, fair lady," he replied, "hearing is obeying. It will."

She examined him closely by the light of her torch, which left her in darkness, and could not make out how much actual seriousness lay behind these confident predictions. They sounded like a hoax, an elaborate bit of foolery; and all these tremendous preparations could well be a mere follow-up intended more to puzzle than to convince. There was a dancing devil in his eyes; and Burton had caught the instant dislike between him and the Second in Command.

"He's trying to get Ross Gardiner's goat,"

she half decided. At any rate it was all for her bright eyes; which was satisfactory.

"So good so far," he cried with a final blow of his axe. "Now pile in the brakes, thick as they'll go," he commanded the two men. "We'll see how the festive Simmins progresses."

The festive Simmins had progressed to the extent that he had driven in pegs or stakes through all the loops at the bottom; and had nearly pulled a lung out in his attempt to get the ridge rope taut between the two trees. But in spite of the best he could do the tent hung as wrinkled as an elephant's pants. Simmins awaited comment dejectedly. To his immense relief this competent young man seemed pleased.

"That's good! That's fine!" he cried. "Those pegs will weather any gale; though you might lay some heavy stones against the slant of the corners. Now all you have to do is to tighten her up."

"Yes, sir," agreed Simmins heartily. That was all! Just tighten her up! Sure! Simmins felt his abraded palms where the cruel rope had bitten.

"Well, get at it," cried Davenport impatiently as Simmins did not stir. "Take your hatchet and get at it!"

Hatchet! Simmins' wits darted about panic-stricken. How could you tighten a tent with a

hatchet? Or did you run amuck and destroy the obstinate thing?

"Yes, sir; quite so, sir," his outside was saying mechanically. He felt Burton's sardonic eye.

"I saw a good one when I cut my stakes," Davenport told him. "Come; I'll show you. Pardon me," he begged the girl, taking the torch from her hand. "Wait here: I'll be back in a jiffy."

He drew Simmins in the direction of the thicket.

"Look here, Simmins," said he good-humouredly, "you're a fraud."

"Yes, sir," replied Simmins in his best manner.

"Were you actually in the Boer War?"

"Yes, sir; indeed so, sir."

"What service? Now come through and be human."

"Remount depot, sir."

"The only thing you fought was horseflies, eh?"

"Quite so, sir."

"Ever see a tent before?"

"Yes, sir; at the circus, sir."

"I see," Davenport grinned. "Am I correct in gathering that nine-tenths of the time you are running a blazer on these people and that you really are human?"

"I don't quite gather your meaning, sir."

"I think you do."

Simmins hesitated; then decided.

"Yes, sir; quite so, sir."

"Good! Now, Simmins, do you want to be with me or against me?"

"Explain, please, sir."

"In plain English do you want me to tell you how to tighten that tent, for example, or bawl you out? Do you want me to back your colossal and monumental bluff, or call it?"

"What do you want of *me,* sir?" asked Simmins astutely.

Davenport chuckled. "You're alive behind that front after all, aren't you, old top? Well, for one thing, for heaven's sake look and act human out here in the woods; while you're around me, anyway. I like friendly creatures to work with."

"That's what Miss Burton says," commented Simmins.

"Oh, *does* she!" said Davenport with interest. "Well, that's all I want at present. Bluff them as much as you want: that's your profession. But don't bluff me. Later I may want you to kill the tall, dark man: I don't know. I don't like him. Now as to that tent: cut two long poles with forks in them; the poles must be considerably longer than the tent is high. Stick the poles slanting under the ropes that suspend the tent,

one at each end of the tent. By straightening the poles you raise and tighten the tent. Get it?"

"Yes, sir; indeed I do, sir!" cried Simmins with real fire and enthusiasm.

"Noble child," Davenport approved these qualities, "we'll have you a Boy Scout yet."

The shelters up, Davenport next started Simmins to digging semicircular ditches around their up-grade sides. This was, he explained, to carry aside the flood waters; at which Gardiner, unable to contain himself further, uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"I beg your pardon?" said Davenport, turning in elaborately polite enquiry.

"I said nothing," Gardiner told him, "but I'd as soon say now that it would be well to drop this childish foolishness and get down to business. It's getting late."

"By childish foolishness you refer—?"

"All this heavy digging and elaborate buffoonery. There's about as much chance of rain as there is of snow. You must take us for easterners or fools. We know *something* of the California climate!"

Davenport dropped the cot bed, which he was unfolding, and sauntered carelessly over to where Gardiner stood. Gardiner drew himself up. When within hand distance Davenport

came to a halt. The men stared each other in the eye.

"You are not overly polite," remarked Davenport after a moment, "and, to be frank, I don't believe I like you anyway. But as we're likely to be together for the next week or so, it will be pleasanter for everybody if we do not quarrel. However, my merry man, I'll talk a language you understand, and I'll just lay you a little bet that it rains and that the redwood yonder falls."

His eyes held Gardiner steadily. The latter looked superciliously down his nose, disdaining reply.

"Well?" challenged Davenport.

"It's an absurd bet."

"I'm offering it. Either you'll take it, or I don't want another peep out of you as to the arrangements I choose to make."

Gardiner's dark face flushed at the other's tone. He made his decision to teach this upstart a lesson.

"I'll take you," he said suddenly, "on condition that I name the bet."

"All right."

"Very well, then. Ten thousand dollars."

Burton uttered a little cry of reproach. Grimstead, who had been listening amusedly, interposed.

"That's beyond a joke, beyond all reason, Gar-

diner," he objected. "Have some sense of proportion—"

"He asked for it; not I," insisted Gardiner steadily.

"Well, I'm not going to permit any such nonsense—" began Grimstead; but Davenport cut him short.

"Thank you, Mr. Grimstead, but don't bother. I'll take that bet."

"Now, young man," expostulated Grimstead, "don't be stampeded by pride into—"

"Pardon me again, Mr. Grimstead; and thank you again; but that's all settled. I'll just get it down in writing and get you to witness it, if you will; so we'll have a little record of the transaction."

"I expect to collect this bet," warned Gardiner, stung by the suggestion of this precaution.

"If you win," amended Davenport, "and I expect to collect it, if I win."

"My money is good," stated Gardiner bluntly. "How do I know whether you can pay?"

"Oh, as for that, I might ask the same question of you."

"Mr. Grimstead can vouch for my solvency. Where are your guarantees?"

The young man looked a little puzzled.

"I have none for the moment, of course; but the instant we go out to a town—"

Gardiner laughed.

"You'll mortgage the garage to pay up—of course," he sneered. "No. As you told me a while back, put up or shut up!"

Davenport shook his head at him, and laughed.

"You're a quibbler, Gardiner. I'll bet you're legal adviser to a predatory corporation."

Gardiner laughed, a nasty, sneering, walk-the-plank laugh.

"Bet's off," said he, "I thought it would be."

"The bet is not off," spoke up Burton suddenly. "I will guarantee Mr. Davenport."

At this the silent wood gods—who, it will be remembered, had again drawn close about—uttered three rousing but silent cheers.

CHAPTER VII

BY the time this little affair was all arranged for, one good-sized storm had broken and cleared, anyway. Burton had told her father plainly that she was of age and mistress of her own fortune. Gardiner had protested and had been put in his place. Both men had appealed to Davenport's better nature not to take advantage of an emotional young girl. Davenport had winked openly and shamelessly at Burton and blithely proclaimed himself a regular Shylock when it came to money. The terms of the bet had been restated, and the men's watches synchronised. The work had been resumed finally in sullen gloom on the part of the Chief and his First Mate, and with joyous, carefree carolling on the part of Davenport, who chose that propitious moment to affront the wood gods with a burlesque of Italian opera. The arrangements were concluded by running the two cars farther out into the open meadow.

"The ground'll soften," speculated Davenport, "and we'll bog down—but if we stick near the road we're likely to get smashed by a branch—I have it!"

He and the now enthusiastic Simmins proceeded to cut a number of willow poles which they laid on the ground to form a sort of platform, or rather floor. On this they ran the two cars.

"Now when we want to go out, we can lay more poles to form a corduroy," he said.

While engaged in cutting the poles Simmins approached him with a proposition.

"I say, sir," said he, "I have a few quid laid by. I'd like it jolly well if you could cut me in on that bet for a tenner or so."

Davenport stared.

"Aren't you taking big chances?" he enquired. "What do you know about the weather?"

"Not a thing, sir!" replied Simmins cheerfully. "Not a thing! But I do know a tidy bit about sportsmen, sir; and, if you will pardon me, I do not think you are bluffing. And I'd back you, sir, against Mr. Gardiner any day of the week."

"Thank you, Simmins. You're in for a tenspot; as you say."

All matters being settled, Davenport distributed the blankets, rugs and greatcoats, and suggested it would be a good idea to turn in.

"Turn in!" cried Burton. "I couldn't sleep a wink. I'm going to sit right here until two

o'clock and greet that rain storm! How could you even suggest sleep?"

"Well," said Davenport, "suit yourself, of course. But if you'll pardon me, I'll just snatch a few winks. I've been driving all day, and I expect we won't any of us get much sleep after the thing hits."

He crawled under the lean-to shelter, and wrapped a blanket around his shoulders.

"Before you leave us," begged Grimstead with a faint irony, "I would like to ask what you meant when you said we were likely to be together for the next week or so. Is that one of your extraordinary predictions?"

"No. Knowledge of California mud," replied Davenport; and was apparently at once asleep.

"Well," stated Grimstead emphatically in a low voice, "I've sat in at some steep games in my time, but for good consistent hole-proof bluffing this young man carries it out more completely than any. By Godfrey, he does it well! He's almost got me looking for his cussed storm myself!"

"If you ask me, I think he is crazy," growled Gardiner morosely. He was still savage over Burton's rescue party; and he reflected vindictively that now he would collect that ten thousand even if Davenport proved to have escaped from a lunatic asylum.

Burton said nothing, but occasionally glanced up to the opening in the redwood tops; where, it must be acknowledged, the stars still gazed serenely down.

After about nine or ten hours of this Grimstead looked at his watch.

"Holy Mike!" he exclaimed. "It's only a little after ten o'clock! I thought it was near morning, at least. Look here, Burton; I'm going to turn in, and I know Ross and Simmins want to too. Sit up and greet your rain storm all you want, but for heaven's sake do it in your tent and give us a chance!"

In five minutes the dying fire was deserted. The lean-to covered four recumbent forms. Inside the little tent Burton lay on the cot staring upward at the flicker of the flames cast across the wall. She would wait thus until the zero hour had passed. It was inunderstandable how the men could sleep in the face of thrilling suspense. After a few moments she heard the sound of a soft and stealthy approach. She raised herself tensely on her elbow. In the tent opening the firelight showed the Irish terrier, his back humped in obsequience, his head ingratiatingly sidewise, his lips wrinkled back in his engaging grin. Seeing himself observed, he sneezed softly in propitiation. It was evident that he was accustomed to spend his nights in the tent; but

his canine courtesy rendered him doubtful of the proprieties.

"Come in, Rap," invited Burton softly.

He made one bound to the foot of the bed, where he curled up in a compact fuzzy ball, wriggling his stump of a tail. Burton threw the edge of her cloak over him. As she sank back again she realised for the first time she had failed to tuck Punketty-Snivvles in his little basket; indeed, she had not the slightest idea where Punketty-Snivvles was. And did not care!

She lay for some time, flat on her back, watching the flicker of the fire against the canvas. Several times her eyes blurred into a staring, and the leaping shadows became monstrous. Then they faded; and she slept.

Some time later she came to herself with a start. The fire shadows were no longer playing against the tent. A heavy, black, breathless stillness brooded, as though the world slumbered deeply. Through the slit of the tent's opening shone a single star. With a foreboding sinking of the heart Burton lighted a match and glanced at her wrist watch. One-fifteen. Fifteen minutes remained before the conclusion of this fantastic bet; and there hung the star in its patch of heaven. A profound disappointment seized her. She reached down to pat the terrier, who acknowledged the attention merely by snuggling

a little closer into his fuzzy ball. Then she lay back and stared up into the darkness.

Never had she experienced such absolute stillness. A silence is made up of many sounds; and the silence of night has, for all its hush, a thousand tiny voices. But here were no frogs, no crickets, no tree toads, no distant muffled owls nor whip-poor-wills. The fronds of the redwood giants were so lofty that the whispers of any breeze there might have been were inaudible. The immediate vicinity of the tent seemed destitute even of the tiny water drippings so usual in the forest. Burton became acutely conscious of the beat of her pulses, the singing of her ears. By holding herself quiet she could even hear faintly the roar of the sea; and that was over a mountain range and many miles. Her thoughts wandered back to the young man and his bet, though in justice it must be stated that not once did the fact that she had guaranteed his paying cross her mind.

Again her mind ungeared, and she heard the far-off surf. It sounded louder, more distinct. Some peculiarity of air currents had curiously affected the acoustics. She struck another match. One-twenty-two. Some one stirred in the other shelter; arose; and poked the embers of the fire to a flame. Burton knew instinctively that this was Ross Gardiner. She turned her

head impatiently. The change of position had blotted out even the friendly star. How near the surf sounded! She must be falling asleep in spite of herself, be already on that borderland where physical sensations are magnified. By an effort she sat upright and shook herself. Rapscallion awoke and whined.

Overhead a tiny twig fell on the canvas with a sharp *spat*. After an interval another; and another; and another. Suddenly Burton remembered that the tent was not under the trees. She sprang from the cot. The twigs were coming more quickly. She thrust open the flap and thrust her head and shoulders through. The roar of the surf was now even more plainly to be heard. A warm drop splashed her forehead; another her cheek. Airs were stirring, soft as velvet. The man at the fire had coaxed it into a tiny flame. Burton saw she had been mistaken; that this was not Gardiner, but Davenport. The young man had on a yellow slicker and sou'wester hat. He looked up and caught her eye.

"She's coming," said he cheerfully. "Listen to her!"

And then Burton suddenly realised that the roar was not of the surf, but of the tempest hurtling through the forest.

She stepped to the fire, glancing curiously at

the recumbent figures under the other shelter.

"Once a man's asleep, he's hard to awaken until after three o'clock," Davenport answered her unspoken wonder, "unless he's been brought up in the open and so is sensitive to outside things. But they'll awaken quickly enough in a few minutes!"

Burton looked at her watch again. One-twenty-six.

"Oughtn't you to awaken Mr. Gardiner to witness that it's raining and he's lost his bet?" she asked.

"He probably wouldn't acknowledge these few drops as rain," said Davenport easily. "He's a natural quibbler."

"There are less than four minutes."

Davenport glanced at his own wrist watch.

"Three," said he composedly, "Gardiner and I set our watches alike, you recall."

"Oh, *dear!*" cried Burton.

"Don't worry; it will be here in less than two. Listen."

The roaring was louder, with a half-guessed undertone of crashing, the beat of a wild rhythm.

"It frightens me," she confessed, "it's like the approach of a ravening wild beast."

"You are safe," he told her confidently; "I'll answer for it. Believe that; and enjoy it as the great and fearful spectacle it will be. But get

into the tent now. You must not get wet, for there will be no chance to dry off; and when this hits it will come in buckets."

They turned together to the tent. One of the figures under the shelter stirred uneasily, some faint echoes of the turmoil penetrating his dreams.

"When the wind comes before the rain,
Hoist your topsails up again.
When the rain comes before the wind,
Topsails dowse and halliards mind!"

chanted Davenport in full voice. Overhead Burton heard a hurried patter as though many little feet scurried across the canvas; then succeeded a drumming.

"Roll out! Roll out!" yelled Davenport. "Roll out and see it rain! At a thousand drops for a cent my ten thousand would be overpaid a thousand times!"

With a furious rush the wind fell upon them.

Burton had thought she would be looking out to see the spectacle. Instead she huddled on the cot, hugged Rapscallion, and wondered how long the tent would stand under the furious assaults delivered against it. The roar of the water against the canvas and the fierce howl of the wind muffled the rending crashes of branches, and

the crescendo of falling trees. All the air seemed full of devils of wind and water. The tent alternately sagged and bulged in sharp, fierce tugs at its moorings, so that it seemed impossible it could hold together. Burton appeared to herself to be completely isolated, with Rapscallion; cut off by the fierceness of the elements from all mankind. Once, however, the circle of the flashlight showed at the bottom of the tent, followed it around. She heard muffled blows, as the tent pegs were assured. A few moments later Davenport showed at the doorway, the water streaming from his face and garments, grinned at her reassuringly, shouted something, and disappeared.

This continued for a long time. It seemed hours to Burton. But a little before three o'clock the fury of the tempest passed on. Orderliness resumed its control. The wild orgy of the elements was replaced by a business-like deluge of rain, that struck its pitch and held it in a steady, sustained roar of falling waters. After the nervous strain of the upheaval it was actually soothing. Burton relaxed; lay down; drew the covers over her. In thirty seconds she was profoundly asleep.

CHAPTER VIII

SHE came to herself hours later, rather uncomfortable at having slept in all her clothes; but considerably refreshed, none the less. The grey daylight had come. Outside, the rain drummed steadily on the tent, but its sound had been overlaid by the sustained rush and dash of flowing waters. The creek was in flood. Burton threw off the blanket and arose, shaking her wrinkled garments into place, and attempting to readjust by sense of touch her tumbled hair. As soon as she stirred, Rapscallion, who must have been awaiting this signal, hopped down from his snug nest, wriggled his stump of a tail, and disappeared outside. Rapscallion was hardy, and possessed a thick coat.

Burton parted the flaps and looked out. Davenport's forethought had faced the opening down the meadow, so that the force of the tempest had hit the back; but this arrangement made it impossible for her to see the other shelter. Only the grey veil of the rain and the slow drift of mists that eddied and concealed and momentarily revealed the columns of trees, or dark little fragments of fern or frond.

After a moment she heard her name called from behind the tent, and upon her answer came Davenport in his oilskins, accompanied by the dog.

"Rapscallion told me you were awake," he greeted her cheerfully. "Rest any?"

"I slept like a top. How did all of you get on?"

"We made out. There's some coffee ready, and we've got a little fire over in the other palace." He glanced at her feet. "Mud six inches deep," he remarked; and before she gathered what he was about, he had picked her up and was on his way.

Her first impulse was to protest and be set down; but an instantaneous second thought reminded her of Simmins, on which she chuckled delightedly and submitted. Indeed the liquid squelch of Davenport's footsteps would have resigned her to worse than that.

"Hullo, everybody!" she cried cheerfully as they hove in sight; but before she could collect her anticipated fun in looks of disapproval or amazement, she was dumped rather unceremoniously on a blanket under the shelter.

"Look out you don't touch the canvas, even with the tip of your finger," warned Davenport, "or it will leak."

A tiny fire blazed merrily just at the edge of

the shelter, a marvellous sight to Burton in all this deluge. Her father and Gardiner sat leaning against a log in the background and Simmins fussed with a coffee pot over a small gasoline stove. Grimstead looked good-natured, and amused by the turn of events; Gardiner was company-manners polite, which meant that he was disgruntled; Simmins was bright and chipper. This fact registered on Burton's mind only on second inspection; when she examined more closely the erstwhile automaton. There was no doubt of it; something had happened to Simmins. His manner was free and independent and human; his spirit was plainly blithe and debonair; no longer did he conceal rigidly his naturally frivolous proclivities. When he caught her eye he greeted her brightly; with entire lack of impertinence, to be sure, but nevertheless brightly, instead of with the mortuary frigidity appropriate to a mastodon preserved in a glacier. He poured some coffee and crawled carefully with it to Burton.

"Coffee, Miss," he should have enunciated briefly in the dispassionately mechanical method of the dictograph; instead of which he remarked: "That'll warm you up."

Not a very startling variation; say you? Get out of my story! It is evident that the tribe of Simmins is unknown to you.

This cataclysmic volte-face was of course, as all such things are, a slow culmination. The Land of the Free, the Melting Pot, and the Refined Screen Drammer had long been getting in their subtle work. But the immediate occasion was Davenport. Simmins was by nature a hero-worshipper; otherwise he would have had nothing stable to tie to in his kind of life. He did no try to imitate his heroes; they were much too splendiferously magnificent for such as he. But he could make of himself an appropriate appanage. I once saw alongside the highway a magnificent work of art painted on a hoarding. It represented in the foreground, and nearly life size, a certain, small, cheap motor car, which we will call the Surrey. Dimly, in the background, ghostlike but plainly to be identified, stood a Rolls-Royce, a Pierce-Arrow, and a Locomobile. The legend ran: "The Surrey, Companion to the World's Best Cars." Well, that was Simmins. Heretofore his world's best car had been a certain speedster with forty-seven suits of clothes and particular manners named Lord Cecil some-thing-or-other-important. There is no use going into the specifications of Lord Cecil, for he does not appear in this story; but wherever in this wide and uncouth world our Simmins wandered there acted he the part of one serving Lord Cecil as particularly and as im-

personally as that peer could require. But with the laying of that ten-thousand-dollar wager, Simmins' allegiance shifted.

That morning when Davenport had awakened from his brief sleep he found that Simmins' place was already empty; and slopping his way out to the cars, he found the butler-chauffeur, clad in a mackintosh, delving in the pockets of the larger car.

"Hullo, Simmins," Davenport addressed the stooping back.

Then even he was astonished. Simmins straightened and turned. He spoke.

"Toodleyou!" he cried brightly.

Sheer astonishment held Davenport dumb.

"You certainly did call the turn!" continued Simmins. "And I congratulate you, sir! I'd like to have you with me at Goodwood! Wouldn't we make a cleaning, if you could pick the ponies as well! My word!" He waved his hand airily. "And to rook his nibs does my heart good! I'll buy me a little souvenir with the tenner you let me in for. I suppose that goes, sir?"

"Certainly," laughed Davenport. "How could I forget it? You and Miss Burton were my only backers. We'll all buy a souvenir. You'd better make yours a Liberty Bond though, Simmins, if you take my advice."

"Liberty Bond, sir, with a tenner?" puzzled Simmins.

"Tenner," repeated Davenport, also pretending to be puzzled. "Oh!" he simulated enlightenment. "I see! Did you imagine for a moment I'd bother with a sum like ten *dollars?*"

"What else, sir?" asked Simmins uneasily.

"Ten hundreds, of course," replied Davenport.

"Good Lord! If it had not rained I'd have been out a thousand dollars?"

"Most certainly," Davenport assured him seriously. "As it is you shall have my check for a thousand the moment Mr. Gardiner pays his debt."

And now you know why Simmins passed the coffee in that care-free, swashbuckling spirit that permitted him to tell Burton that that would warm her up!

Burton too looked at him with a surprise that he received *almost* with a cheerful wink.

"You're coming on, Simmins," she remarked.

"Yes, miss," he acknowledged with so engaging an air that both Burton and Davenport burst into laughter, in which Simmins joined quite unabashed.

"Looks as if it might rain forever," remarked Grimstead after a pause.

Davenport glanced at his wrist watch and made a rapid calculation.

"It will stop at ten minutes to ten," he stated.

Grimstead too made a calculation.

"I remember now you did say it would last just eight hours and twenty minutes," he said, "and that would bring it to the hour you name. I'll acknowledge that you called the turn on this storm, and you cut pretty fine to the time it would begin, too. You had mighty good luck there; but you can't lean on your luck too heavily, my boy. You're cutting it *too* fine. Be reasonable!"

"Nevertheless, if you'll allow me five minutes either way," smiled the young man, "I'll lay anybody another bet." He glanced at Gardiner, who did not look up.

The millionaire laughed.

"Well, you are a good sport; I'll say that for you. I'm no heavy gambler, like you young fellows with lots of money. I'll bet you a box of cigars, just to make it interesting."

"All right."

"By the way," added Grimstead, "didn't you say something about a tree—?"

"It's down, square across the road," interrupted Simmins eagerly.

"The deuce you say!" Grimstead sat up. "How many others are down?" he enquired after an instant.

"None, sir, not one!" cried Simmins trium-

phantly, as though the glory were his own personally. "I took especial pains to look."

"This is the most extraordinary exhibition of either fantastic bull luck or prophecy or a mixture of both I have ever witnessed!" said Grimstead. "It's—it's almost uncanny!"

"There's nothing uncanny about it," assured Davenport, "and there's no luck at all. It's exact, or nearly so."

"Exact! You'll have to show me!"

"Well, haven't I?"

"To a certain extent. But looks to me as if there's a lot of luck."

"Not at all. The storm was the exact product of a whole series of causes and effects working out; and as the causes and effects are all subject to physical law, which is unchangeable, any prediction as to the time or the direction or the strength or duration of a storm can be entirely exact, provided it is based on those causes and effects."

"And the tree?" put in Burton interestedly.

"Same thing: cause and effect. A thousand of them have been working for a very long time. Some of them are even so small as a beetle severing a single root tendril. Yet the sum of *all* of them points inexorably to a definite moment of culmination. The tree falls. You see that, don't you?"

"Of course I see that!" replied Grimstead impatiently. "But to make an accurate prediction every one of these numberless causes and effects must be known, without exception, and their precise strength and bearing accurately estimated. That is impossible!"

"How else could it be done?" demanded Davenport.

"I don't know—luck! Sheer, bald luck!" growled Grimstead.

"At any rate it saved us a wetting—and perhaps death if we had stayed under that tree," Burton pointed out.

"By Jove, you're right!" agreed Grimstead heartily. "And incidentally won your ten thousand dollars. You'll have to pay up, you know, Gardiner! Fair bet!"

"I intend to pay up; I always discharge my obligations. The young man hardly expects me to carry such a sum of money in my waistcoat pocket, I suppose," replied Gardiner. He turned to Davenport with thinly veiled insolence. "I hope you have planned what you will do with such a large amount?" said he blandly.

Davenport was surveying him with dancing eyes.

"No," he replied carelessly, "I can't say I have. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll match you for it."

He produced a coin which he balanced on the tip of his finger, challengingly.

Gardiner hesitated uncomfortably; then shrugged his shoulders with as good an air of disdain as he could muster.

"Certainly not; I'm no damn fool," he decided.

A quickly smothered sound burst from Simmins. It sounded like a choking cough, but had started life as a British cheer. Davenport pocketed his coin with a droll wink in the direction of his new slave.

"As I said before with reference to quarrelling," said he, "we shall be here for five or six days, anyway; and we may as well consider our resources."

"Is that another prediction?" demanded Grimstead.

"Well—in a way—call it that. It does not pretend to be exact; for it is founded merely on common sense and a knowledge of Northern California roads in the wet season. The gumbo out there would stick a ground squirrel. If you don't believe it, go and take a look. There'll be no traffic of any sort until it hardens. Of course one might walk, at a pinch, but it would be some walk! I'm not sure you wouldn't stick like a fly on flypaper at that. Anyway there's

little gained by that, unless your business, sir, makes it absolutely imperative that you get somewhere in a given time."

"My business," stated Grimstead, "for the next ten days or two weeks is to burn up about a half pound of tobacco and to see that the scenery doesn't move around too much. I had also a sort of supplementary job of murdering a few rainbows; but that was a frill."

"Good!" said Davenport. "I was a little afraid we'd have to make the try. As for the rainbows, the stream yonder is full of them. Of course in this flood water you can't catch any; but by to-morrow you could try good bait, and by the day after a fly."

"Then let her be wet, if she wants to be. I'm happy. I don't know why we were skyhooting over so much country, anyway. This looks good."

"We have, I believe, no provision for an extended stay anywhere," Gardiner pointed out icily.

"I have confidence in this young man," countered Grimstead comfortably. "From some hidden magic he will produce all that we require for our simple wants."

"I have plenty of camp food," corroborated Davenport, "for I had just stocked up for rather a long cruise. If you can stand camp fare we

won't starve. As soon as it stops raining we will get things a little more shipshape. I think there will be bedding enough at a pinch. If not, put on two suits of underwear; you'll find it warmer than an extra blanket—air space, you know. I only wish we had more suitable clothes all round." He spoke generally, but he glanced at Burton's silk-clad ankles.

"I have some sport clothes and heavy tramping boots, if you mean me," said she. "And I'm glad we're going to stay. I adore these great trees. I want to live with them. I believe I could stay here forever."

Grimstead lay prone and lighted a cigar. His object was in way of attainment. Here was a little human interest. Sulks gone. For the first time forward and not backward looking. To be sure Gardiner was not living up to expectations; but that was a small matter. The Pirate Chief had not particularly set his mind on Gardiner, though Burton thought he had. Gardiner was good looking, and—as the Second in Command—available on the instant, so he was drafted into service as a hoped-for antidote. If results could be procured without him, as now seemed possible, Gardiner could go hang. Pirate Chiefs are always ruthless, just like that. What Grimstead wanted to do was to rid himself of his two especial hates. He was accustomed to be-

ing attacked in the newspapers, and shuddered at by the altruistic, and ambuscaded by his fellow pirates, and double-crossed by his amiable fellow-club members, and being grand-juryised, and all that; and he took it with a good-natured growl. They were part of life as he understood it. But two things really worried him, had the power to penetrate to his inner self-poise. Or, to speak more freely, two things got under his skin; could get his goat. One of these was Punketty-Snivvles; the other was Willie Smeed. They were both always underfoot. Punketty-Snivvles we have met. It is not necessary to draw a full-length portrait of Willie. He was a nice enough boy, but the symbols of his exterior meant things to the Pirate Chief that were perhaps not entirely justified by essential facts. Lots of people have remarkably sumptuous manners, play the ukelele, wear embroidered monograms on the left sleeves of silk shirts, affect small, downy, light moustaches, take a personal interest in flower arrangements, are authorities on colour schemes, dress always in light or pastel tones, and are for all that admirable, efficient, forceful and lovable human beings. Lots of grown people besides golf-professionals are called Willie and get away with it nobly. But not with Pa Grimstead! When he found there was no open season on Willie Smeed in any month of

the year, and unwise to kill Punketty-Snivvles at all, he just abducted his daughter and departed thence. Willie was left forlorn. Punketty-Snivvles was still with him; but one thing at a time!

His contented thoughts had wandered this far when Burton, as though she had followed them, enquired for the dear little animal.

"I stowed him in the car last night, miss," answered Simmins, "and covered him quite safely."

"Better get him," advised Burton.

Punketty-Snivvles, on being given the freedom of the camp, took up his station opposite Rapscallion and started in a shrill, yapping voice to tell that rough-neck where to get off. He did this from near his mistress, and he kept a beady black eye on her to catch her approval. This was an old and successful game with Punketty-Snivvles. Rapscallion closed both eyes in order to lower the percentage of temptation anyway.

And then the heavens of Things as They Are fell crashing about Punketty-Snivvles. His mistress reached out, seized him by the scruff of his neck and cuffed him soundly.

"You exasperating little idiot; keep quiet!" quoth she.

Punketty-Snivvles, released, backed into the deepest part of the shelter—which happened to be next to Ross Gardiner—and there he

crouched, his eyes shining phosphorescently, gazing small malevolence at a ruined world.

A huge cloud of smoke arose from the recumbent Grimstead.

"Oh, *boy!*" he cried in tones of ecstasy; and then hastened to ask: "How big do those rainbows run, Davenport?"

CHAPTER IX

AT the appointed hour the rain ceased and the clouds broke in the instantaneous California fashion to admit a bright shining sun. The whole world was a-glitter with jewels, and little mists eddying through the forest drifted in and out of steady, broad shafts of light. Down in the hollow the creek still roared wildly; and nearer at hand yet sounded the drip of many waters.

"You're a marvel of a weather prophet," acknowledged Grimstead, "and you must have had long experience in the country. I take off my hat to you. And I may add that if I had your luck I'd head for Tia Juana and the ponies."

Simmins brought the bags from the car. All retired to return in a few moments dressed in the loose, serviceable clothes and stout boots of the summer camper. Then they all tramped down to the road to see the fallen giant.

A full-grown redwood tree is impressive beyond the reach of description when it is standing upright in its proper way; but it fails to impress the faculties of awe as deeply as when it lies prone. The height of an average room is ten feet; the thickness of this tree then, as

it lay before them, would fill two stories of a house; the roof of a bungalow would just have been visible over it; to mount to its side a flight of thirty steps would have been required. The little group stood looking at it in the silence of awe. Its length extended at a long angle across the road and far into the forest on the other side. The root circle stood high above the trunk, shaggy with the wet earth that clung to it. The hole from which it had been torn was as wide as a city garden plot, and half full of water.

"Looks like the shell hole of a Big Bertha," remarked Davenport.

"Were you in France?" demanded Burton quickly.

"I saw a little of it."

"How in time will they ever clear *that* out of the road?" interposed Grimstead, who was following his own line of thought.

"I think they'll probably have to build a new road around it," suggested the young man.

Grimstead measured the difficulties with his eye.

"At that rate it will be some time before there is any through traffic," he predicted. "Well, I'll say further that you're quite a woodsman, young man, to have spotted this tree as due to take a tumble. I suppose there are indications to those who know."

"Cause and effect," repeated Davenport.

They ventured a few feet into the forest and saw that somehow, in spite of a few evidences of fallen limbs or splintered branches, of matted brake or twisted bush, the woodland had recovered marvellously its customary green softness. But the underbrush was still too water-laden to tempt them far. They swung back into the meadow past the cars. Grimstead stared curiously at Davenport's little machine. By daylight it looked even tinnier than ever. In fact a great deal of the outside shell was of galvanised construction that had not been painted.

"Make her yourself?" enquired Grimstead.

"Such as she is," acknowledged Davenport carelessly. "I didn't use much pains with her looks because she is just an experiment. I'm trying something out."

"You said she was electric driven?" queried Grimstead.

"Yes."

"Isn't that a curious thing for a man like you on this sort of a trip? What's the matter with gas?"

"Nothing the matter with gas, except that it costs money, and is sometimes hard to get."

"And I suppose charging a battery costs nothing," struck in Gardiner scornfully, "and there are charging stations everywhere."

"Often enough for my purpose," rejoined Davenport with entire good humour.

"I should think you'd want more speed and power," observed Grimstead.

"Geared as she is I can make fifty an hour on a paved road; and that means power for anything within reason—I haven't had it brake-tested; but it must develop between thirty-five and forty-five horsepower."

"Your battery can't have a long charge-life at that rate," pursued Grimstead. "I don't see how you keep charged. How many hours do you make?"

"I don't know; I haven't determined that yet. That's what I'm experimenting on."

Grimstead paused to get this straight.

"Do I understand you to say that you are running, on the original charging?" he asked, "that you have not recharged since starting?"

"That's it."

"Where did you start from? How long have you been out?"

"Left San Rafael about three weeks ago." He stooped to examine a dial. "Been just eleven hundred miles."

"On one charge!" exploded Gardiner. "You'll have to show me!"

Davenport straightened up and looked at him coldly.

"On the contrary," he pointed out, "I do not have to show you."

"You interest me very much, Mr. Davenport," interposed Grimstead, secretly gesturing Gardiner to keep quiet. "Among other things, as you perhaps know, I have very extensive hydro-electric interests, and am in consequence somewhat of an electrical engineer. What you tell me indicates that your new battery—I assume it is your invention; and that it is that feature you are trying out?"

Davenport nodded.

"Well, if you really have a battery of such power and long life, it will turn the storage battery business upside down."

The Pirate Chief, like all good commanders, was always ready to climb himself to the crow's-nest. This speck on the horizon was probably a mirage that would vanish on nearer approach; but there was just a remote possibility it might be a galleon heavy with untold wealth. Or, indeed, it might be somewhere between the extremes: some craft laden mainly with dreams, but with a trifle of metal ballast worthy of a pirate's attention. So like a prudent chief, he piped all hands below decks, including the Second in Command, unlimbered the carronades, put over the helm, and bore down on the stranger.

"Such a battery, if it could be well proved out, would be valuable," pursued Grimstead. One of the great elements in his success was that he knew better than to cry down the obvious. "I confess I can't imagine the principle—"

"Like to look at it?" enquired Davenport unexpectedly.

This was luck Grimstead had not hoped for —yet. He assented with alacrity. All crowded curiously around while the young man raised the hood.

They saw what appeared to be an ordinary large electric motor set across the frame. In front of it and connected to it by two thick wires was a black box measuring about a foot along all dimensions.

"There she is," said Davenport cheerfully.

"That! Is *that* your whole battery?" cried Grimstead, pointing an incredulous finger. "Why, that thing wouldn't run a bell for three weeks, let alone a car. You're joshing me, young man. Where's your running battery? Under the seat?"

Without reply Davenport raised the seat cushions to display a recess occupied only by tools; lifted the trap door of the rear to show a nearly empty interior.

"You see, I have nothing up my sleeve with

which to deceive you," said he, jestingly. "There's the whole works."

He stooped to disconnect the two wires and tucked the black box under his arm.

"We may as well have some light in the tent for Miss Grimstead," he explained. "I have a little outfit that I will install."

On the return to the camp Grimstead fell back to consult low-voiced with his Second in Command.

"What do you make of it, Ross?" he enquired.

"He's lying, showing off. The thing is impossible."

"Well, he certainly drove up last night from somewhere."

"He probably lives quite near and recharges from water power."

"Probably," agreed Grimstead, "but even at that he's got something. That box isn't any larger than a starting battery. We'll have to look into it a little. A battery as compact as that will drive others off the market."

"Provided it doesn't take too much care and tinkering," agreed Gardiner carelessly.

Davenport put everybody to work, after a quick meal had been improvised and eaten, so that by mid-afternoon a comfortable and convenient camp had come into existence. The tent had been moved a short distance into a circle of

small redwood trees that stood about it to form a stockade, and the ground had been levelled free from hummocks. The other shelter had been left where it was; but its boundaries had been defined by small logs within which, so Davenport informed them, the men were privileged to pile as much soft bedding as they felt they needed and were able to find. The cook fire had its proper crevice within which to function; and a wide space had been scooped for the friendship fire. After all else was finished, and while the others were having a fine puttery time bestowing their personal effects, Davenport constructed with his axe ingenious and comfortable backs against which to lean while sprawled out before the blaze. Then he departed with Simmins and Rapscallion in search of fuel. The sound of his axe could be heard as he chopped for dry heart wood.

By the time these things were all finished the sun once more was slanting from the west. Simmins, panic-stricken, claimed total ignorance of camp cookery.

"I'll do it," stated Davenport briefly. "You'll do the dishes, run the errands, get the water and carry in the wood. I'll chop the wood." He looked around at the others. "That's the only thing I want you all to leave strictly alone—the axe. I'll do all the axe work myself."

"Mr. Gardiner and papa both can use an axe," Burton pointed out. "They're regular lumber jacks. They won't cut off a foot."

"I do not doubt it," agreed Davenport, "but if that's the case, they understand. It's too far to a grindstone. Either a man wants to be entirely responsible for his edge and do all the chopping; or else do none of it."

"I'm perfectly willing," agreed Gardiner disdainfully. "Hard work is out of my line."

Davenport grinned.

"Well, I imagine it's going to be in everybody's line for a while. How do you think we're going to get those cars out of here and into the road?" He waved toward the centre of the meadow where the motors stood, side by side, each on its platform of laid poles. "We've got to build a road, not only across the meadow but around that fallen tree. There's going to be quite a little exercise involved in that, I'm thinking; and everybody will have to help."

"What fun!" cried Burton.

"It *is* fun," agreed Davenport, "to be up against things and work out by your own ingenuity."

"How will we go at it?"

"Well, first we'll cut poles for a corduroy over the soft ground."

"You have exclusive use of the axe, I believe," drawled Gardiner.

"The poles must be trimmed with the hatchet and then carried or dragged into place," continued Davenport; only an aggravated sweetness of tone indicating this as a reply to Gardiner's comment. "Then when we're across the meadow, we'll simply clear a right-of-way through the brush, and corduroy where we need it. It won't be much of a road, but it will get us out. We will start to-morrow morning."

"It'll be a lot simpler to have Simmins hike out as soon as the road dries a little and bring in a force of men," growled Gardiner.

"Yes, that can be done," agreed Davenport, "if you want to lose this chance."

"Chance? Chance of what?" struck in Grimstead interestedly.

"Chance of showing yourself you can take care of yourself no matter what happens," replied Davenport with a faint shade of contempt; "chance of proving you've not grown fast to an electric button; chance of sweating a little on some good, hard constructive work for a purpose; chance of being up against it and getting out of it by your own effort. Aren't many of those chances these days. Don't you get any fun out of that sort of thing?"

"Can't say I do," returned Gardiner unimpressed.

"Well, that's too bad," commiserated Davenport. "Because it's really quite a lark to meet difficulties. Especially is it too bad when you have to do it anyway."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Grimstead, who was following this by-play with considerable inward relish.

"Why, this," returned Davenport. "Simmins would walk twenty miles—good hard miles that would take him all day—and he'd get to Tecolote. Tecolote has a general store and post office; a boarding house or hotel; and the public garage. It is situated on the cross roads that go from Soquel to Morro, on the coast. There are three small houses in patches of garden."

The young man paused to light his pipe.

"Simmins arrives, footsore and weary—I believe that's the way they always arrive—and, like a good soldier, he thinks first of duty and goes to the garage. He will find it a good-size affair of corrugated iron with a dirt floor containing about six disreputable-looking cars, a bewildering mess of junk iron, a forge, an anvil, a work bench, and a tall, fat, profane man. There may be one or two others present—I don't know—but the tall, fat, profane man will be

the one to whom Simmins will unfold his moving tale. And, believe me, before the tall, fat and profane man—whose name is Tom—gets through with him, he will have all of the aforesaid moving tale! He is possessed of a monomaniacal desire to get to the bedrock bottom of all situations; and all the necessary qualifications for doing so. Simmins may start with the full intention of luring him out by telling him merely of a towing job; but before he has been ten minutes among those present he will have conveyed an accurate picture of our situation and personnel. I'm not arguing about this; I'm telling you. When he quite understands, Tom will tower over Simmins and discourse as follows:—no, not as follows; I forgot Miss Grimstead's presence."

"Don't mind me," urged Burton. "I've been a débutante and am used to a rough life."

"No. Tom is as profane as he is tall and fat. But he will discourse approximately as follows:

" 'You poor attenuated simulacrum of the manly virtues,' he will say, 'why in the abode of the preordained condemned phantasmagoria of mediæval religious belief don't you bring in your own car? Are you all afflicted with infantile paralysis? Are you victims of ossification of the cranial cavity? Why do you come bothering me?'

"And then Tom will enumerate seriatim twenty-eight jobs demanding his immediate and constant attention. He will probably end by telling Simmins of a good winter resort and advising him to proceed thither without delay."

"That's all right," said Grimstead, who was laughing heartily, "but Simmins would be authorised to offer any pay whatever within reason—money-no-object idea."

"Tom—regrettable as it may be—is little swayed by thoughts of pelf when he has his dander up. And Tom's dander is positively self-rising when he envisions a—pardon me, but the words are his—grown-up he-man without guts enough to help himself. At such times the glitter of gold is nothing in Tom's life."

"I think Mr. Grimstead's name would have some weight, even with such a person as you describe," said Gardiner with quiet confidence.

Davenport threw back his head and laughed.

"Following Simmins' ill-received offer of bribery," he continued to visualise his imaginary scene, "he would adduce the consideration just referred to. 'Grimstead,' he would roar, 'is it that old lying, sneaking, bull-dozing, land-grabbing, robbing usurper of the public domain? I wouldn't go an inch to pull him out of hell!' and then he'd throw Simmins out on his neck."

Grimstead's bushy eyebrows had drawn together and his eyes flashed lightnings.

"You are insulting, young man," he warned.

"Not I," replied Davenport cheerfully. "I'm just telling you what Tom would say. I know him and his methods pretty well. Point is, the old cuss would work all night in a rainstorm to get us out if we were helpless, but he wouldn't raise his hand to do anything we could do ourselves."

"There must be others available," growled Grimstead, still ruffled.

"No; there aren't," replied Davenport, dropping his extravagant manner; "not near enough to be available, within reason. It's much simpler to do it ourselves. It's not a serious job."

Grimstead happened to look aside at this moment to see Gardiner glance at his long, well-kept hands. A sardonic gleam crossed his eyes.

"You're right, Davenport," he said, "and as you say, it will be fun."

CHAPTER X

"WELL, this is something like!" cried Grimstead as he lowered himself to a cushion of aromatic boughs at just the right distance from a leaping camp fire. He was well-fed, and warm and dry, and pleasantly tired after the mild exercise he had been forced to take. "Gardiner, I don't know why we didn't think of this ourselves, before we got our noses rubbed in it." He glanced about the scene with satisfaction. Everything was trim and shipshape, just the way he liked to see things. The coals of the cooking fire glowed tidily beneath a kettle of beans—a sensible, well-behaved little fire that one could work about without scorching. Utensils hung handily from wooden pegs driven into the soft bark of a tree. The ground was free of bumps, roots and hummocks and was evenly carpeted with fir boughs. Between the trunks of the trees the tent, within which Burton was moving around, could be seen glowing like a moon or a huge, frosted lantern. The real moon walked through hushed aisles of the forest, turning solid realities to the insubstantial, fragile silver filigree of enchantment. Rapscallion slumbered ridiculously

near the fire. Punketty-Snivvles, who was a clever little devil in spite of all, having in the course of a single day realised his fall from his high estate, and having become undemanding and unobtrusive, sat a few paces away adoring Rapscallion. He had essayed in turn arrogance, yapping insult, and an ingratiating playfulness, to none of which had the terrier paid the smallest attention. Punketty-Snivvles might have been made of thin air. So at last Punketty-Snivvles became a hero worshipper. He followed Rapscallion slavishly about, trying in a puny, futile fashion to copy his raffish rough and ready manners, hoping mightily for some attention; and when, as now, the marvel slept, Punketty-Snivvles deprived himself of needed sleep to sit, a sliver of imbecile pink tongue showing, worshipping with humble heart. Thus did Punketty-Snivvles at last take the initial steps of the Climb; and acquire his first Merit.

Simmins, on the other side, was doing the same thing toward *his* new hero, though he did not stick out his tongue.

"Young man," began Grimstead in a large, paternal manner, blowing the first cloud from his cigar, "where is your shop? San Rafael, did you say?"

"My shop?—oh, Sausalito," replied Davenport.

"Do a pretty good business?"

"It makes me a living."

"I suppose you could use a little more."

"Who couldn't?"

"A little additional capital might enable you to expand to advantage."

"Additional capital," said Davenport unexpectedly, with a grin, "wouldn't enable me to expand an inch."

"But you just said you could use more money."

"That's different."

"I don't see how it's different," said Grimstead a little impatiently, "but it doesn't matter. I like your style, young man. You're a live wire, and it's a principle of mine to connect with live wires. It crossed my mind that if you needed a little—buy in a share, you understand. Of course on investigation—"

"So you *are* interested in my battery, after all," said Davenport.

Grimstead stared at him, then threw back his head and laughed.

"Keno!" he acknowledged. "At least I'm interested in what you *say* about your battery. The State of Missouri isn't big enough to hold me when it comes to what you claim for it. I shrewdly suspect that in that you're trying to spoof me, as Willie Smeed would say. But it's obvious you've come from somewhere, and it's

obvious that little battery brought you. Even if it's only five or ten miles, and you expect to get home again, you've got something big."

"Of course," Davenport pointed out, "I haven't tried to sell you anything, nor make you believe anything. And I don't suppose, in view of your technical knowledge, I would have any right to resent your doubting my word. Nevertheless, I repeat that with that battery as my sole motive power I have driven about eleven hundred miles."

"Without recharging?" demanded Gardiner.

"Without recharging," repeated Davenport.

A polite but restrained silence succeeded this remark. There really seemed nothing further for either Grimstead or Gardiner to say, except you're a liar; which in the circumstances seemed hardly tactful. Davenport himself relieved the situation.

"Don't feel embarrassed!" he laughed. "Say it if you want to; I won't be offended. It may relieve your minds. There's no way to prove it to you right now, so there's no sense worrying about it."

"Pardon me," put in Gardiner suavely, "I think your statement could be at least partially tested with the facilities at hand."

"What do you mean?" asked Davenport.

"I mean that if you are willing to allow your

battery to carry a load for any specified length of time, I can arrange the load."

"If it's not beyond the power of my battery, go to it," agreed Davenport. "I figure she'll give about forty horsepower."

"That is more than ample. For how long?"

"Long as you like—until we get out of here, if you please. Of course that's subject to Miss Burton's use of it for her lights."

Grimstead, who had been watching Davenport's face as he was accustomed to watch a poker opponent's, raised his voice.

"Burton, come here!" he roared. Then as the girl appeared in the circle of firelight, "Can you get along with candles? Can you let us have that battery?"

"Why, if necessary, of course. What is the idea?"

"This young man agrees that it will perform some test Ross has up his sleeve continuously until we go away."

"Of course I can use candles!" cried the girl, her eyes lighting up. "Is it another bet?"

"I'm willing," said Davenport, "doubles or quits. Is it a bet?"

"No, not, and emphatically far otherwise!" stated Grimstead. "Not so far as I'm concerned, though I won't stand in Ross's way to getting back his money."

"I don't bet that heavily against another man's game," said Gardiner, "but I do know something of electrical possibilities, and I'm ready to put up a reasonable amount, say five hundred, that I can produce a legitimate test right here, and that this thing won't stand up under it. It is understood that my test must be met, and that the time limit is four days."

"Well, that's rather an 'unsight unseen' proposition itself," rejoined Davenport. "But just to show you I'm a sport I'll go you, provided that it is not beyond the strength of the battery. Its endurance within its strength is all I claim."

"What I propose," said Gardiner, "is that the terminals of this battery be connected with the self-starter of our car; and the starting pedal be locked down. Then the battery, through the self-starter, will be turning over the engine against the compression. I don't know the exact power required, but it is considerable. To-morrow I will compute it exactly. It is sufficient to exhaust the ordinary starting battery in from ten to twenty minutes."

"That's ingenious," acknowledged Davenport, "but it's going to be as noisy as a street car. It's going to destroy our peace and quiet; and will end by getting on our nerves, I'm afraid."

"It's begun by getting *your* nerve, *I'm* afraid," sneered Gardiner.

"Pshaw," rejoined Davenport impatiently, "I'm not speaking for myself; I can stand it. I'm thinking of the peace and quiet of a perfectly good and charming camp. After all, tests can be applied at any time."

Gardiner leaned back with a triumphant glance at his chief.

"Oh!" cried Burton, indignant. "You aren't going to give up like that! *Were* you bluffing? I didn't think you'd do that!"

"I wasn't bluffing," said Davenport quietly.

"Then do it!"

"Well, I'll tell you," suggested the young man, "there's no use getting excited or disagreeable about it. Let's be reasonable. To-morrow morning we will move camp upstream a little to get away from the racket, and then we'll start her up. There's no sense in spoiling our night's rest. Stay an extra day if you want to; it's worth it."

"I'll agree to that," acquiesced Gardiner after a moment, "as far as the general camp is concerned. But personally I stipulate to stay here within sound of the motor."

Burton exclaimed indignantly; but Davenport was unperturbed.

"Well," said he cheerfully, "you encourage me. A little while ago the battery couldn't last over ten or twenty minutes; and now it's night-time

already! I'll agree you shall stay here, if you want to, provided Simmins stays too."

"Simmins!" exclaimed Gardiner. "Why should Simmins stay here?"

"For the same reason you do," replied Davenport blandly; "just to hear the motor go."

"Well," sighed Grimstead after a moment, "this trip certainly promises to be interesting, and I'm glad I came. If the thing works even partially as you say it does, you must have a brand-new principle in battery construction. The old principles have been carried to the utmost of refinement and have not resulted in this compactness and efficiency."

"Alleged," drawled Gardiner.

"It is a new principle," said Davenport, paying no attention to the interjection. "Would you like to hear about it?"

Grimstead put on his poker face to conceal his inner excitement. This offer was more than he had hoped.

"I should like to very much," he replied.

"So should I," spoke up Burton, "but I want to hear it in words of one syllable."

"It's not at all complicated. Now you know if you put a copper plate and a zinc plate side by side in an acid solution, and connect them with wires you generate electricity. That is the simple wet battery.

"All right. If you run a dynamo you also generate electricity, this time by induction.

"Where does that electricity come from? You might say chemical action in the one case or mechanical action in the other; but they are actually only a means to an end. The world lies in a great field of static or inert magnetism. The cell and the dynamo are merely means by which this inert electricity is livened up, made into kinetic or active electricity; they actually produce nothing in themselves. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly," said Burton.

"When we have used this kinetic electricity, or it becomes 'grounded,' it returns to the reservoir of static. All the electric lights you have in your house, for example, are manifestations of the static electricity—which is everywhere—made available for use by means of a rather clumsy and cumbersome apparatus involving mechanical power and dynamos and all the rest of it. All I've done is to make a short cut between the static electricity in which we are immersed and the kinetic electricity we can use."

"That is self-evident, young man," remarked Grimstead drily.

"I am just making it clear for Miss Burton.

"Go back to the wet cell. It is heavy and awkward and short lived. My battery is just like a wet cell without those disadvantages. The

wet cell consists of two plates of different metal in a solution. Mine consists of two plates of different metals side by side in air. The wet cell transforms or produces its electricity by or through a chemical action that is limited in effectiveness and in duration. My battery transforms the static from the air into kinetic without chemical action—apparently; and in much greater quantity in proportion to the size of the plates. It's a short cut, as I said—I'm talking like a school teacher! However, that's the general idea."

Grimstead was sitting up now in his interest.

"There *must* be chemical action!" he cried. "You can't lift yourself by your bootstraps."

"Of course; there probably is," agreed Davenport. "I only said there was *apparently* none. It must be very slight—like the apparent loss in radium, I suppose—for as I say, I have used this battery to drive my car eleven hundred miles without any wear I can determine by looking at it."

"What metals do you use?"

"Pardon," returned the young man, "but there, of course, you're asking my secret. I will say this, however. They are alloys of metals easily procurable. The alloy must be exact and the distance between the plates must be exact. I have a micrometer screw to adjust my plates."

"You say the metals are easily procurable. How much do you estimate it cost you to build such a battery?"

"Mine up to now have been experimental and built piecemeal by experiment," Davenport pointed out. "But in quantity they could be built—of that size—for somewhere between fifty and a hundred and fifty dollars. It isn't the materials; it's the accuracy, and I don't know just what workmen of the necessary skill would cost."

Grimstead's poker face was still doing business, but his cigar butt was chewed to a frazzle.

"You say that battery there will run a brake test of forty horsepower?" he asked.

"About that."

"Will a larger battery develop more horsepower in proportion? What are the limits in capacity?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. I never built but two, and they are of the same size. I do know they will work tandem though, for I drove some of the machinery of a little saw mill with them for a day or two. As far as I know there is no reason why you shouldn't put a hundred of them in a row. There's no limit apparently to the amount of static you can take by means of dynamos; why should there be any more limit to what you can take by other means? Of course,

I don't know; I'm just beginning to try it out."

"Well, you may have something, though it sounds pretty radical," yawned Grimstead, dropping prone as though the subject had ceased to interest him. "As I get it, we all go to work to-morrow morning, and get the afternoon off. Is that it, Boss?"

"That's it," replied Davenport.

"How about those rainbow? Think they'll be hungry by afternoon?"

"You might try them with grubs; or a Colorado spinner. Never can tell."

Burton hopped from the log.

"The moonlight is heavenly," she declared, "I must see it through the big trees. Will you go with me, Mr. Davenport, outside the firelight?"

Davenport jumped to his feet. Gardiner too stirred as though about to arise, but paused as he felt Grimstead's restraining hand on his arm. The two young people stepped out into the enchantment of the forest.

CHAPTER XI

THEY walked for a hundred yards, feeling their way in the black and white contrasts of moonlight; then sat side by side on the trunk of a small fir tree uprooted by the gale. There was nothing to say; there could be nothing to say in the presence of moonlit night in the redwoods. What we in the busy world would call the intangibles—majesty, awe, peace, calm aloofness, and shivery, ecstatic, fragile poetry—here became real forces that ever flowed and would ever flow world without end. The little human consciousness must perforce lift and blend to the mighty stream. Burton and the young man submitted to the spell. It submerged their spirits, and dissolved them and expanded them, until they had ceased to be tight and huddled with little affairs and tiny details, and rose to contain and be contained by these greater things.

At last Burton sighed and stirred.

"It is almost too perfect," she said. "It almost hurts. But I shall never forget it."

The required change had come into their souls. The Invisibles withdrew a little space. They began to chat, to make disjointed remarks, swing-

ing back down the wide arc of ecstasy to the starting point of every-day things. In a little while Davenport was talking eagerly, openly. The subject was his battery.

"I don't like to say so very openly, people are apt to think you a silly ass if you get enthusiastic, but I'm very keen on that," he confessed.

"I think it's wonderful," she encouraged. "I don't know much about such things; but I do know Dad, and when he's enthusiastic about anything, it's apt to be valuable."

"Do you think he's enthusiastic?" wondered Davenport. "I didn't observe many symptoms."

"I know Dad," she repeated.

"Well, I hope he is. I believe he's just the man to help."

"It ought to be tremendously valuable. You'll probably make a million or so out of it. I hope you do."

"Yes, of course. I'd like to make something out of it. But that isn't the real point. Do you mind if I talk a little about it?"

"Oh, please!" she begged.

"Don't you see what it will mean to the world," he said, "the poor struggling old world? Lord, how it does work! What a burden it does carry! How it does struggle! All its energy is consumed just in feeding itself and clothing itself

and keeping itself warm. And it has to hustle just to do that." He twisted on the log more nearly to face her. "Look here," he demanded, "what is the greatest material need, the very greatest need of the world?"

"Davenport's batteries," she replied promptly.

He threw back his head and laughed boyishly.

"I *was* getting preachy, wasn't I? Well, the thing the world needs most is breathing-time, time to play more and to soak up the things that never come to a man when he's in a hurry or surrounded by the buzz-flies of detail. What the work-a-day world needs most is *leisure,* a little leisure."

His laughing face had become grave, and his dancing eyes level.

"Until the pressure of material necessities is lifted a little from lives the human race is going to be lop-sided. Only with leisure can come the greater, leavening, quiet influences of the spirit that will make life balanced."

"The trouble is," said Burton, "people are never satisfied. If they'd be contented to go without so many frills they'd have leisure enough."

"No, you're wrong. They should have the frills. The frills represent the grace and beauty of life. We all have an instinct for frills; and real instincts should be gratified—in proportion.

But the point is, frills are too hard to get. A living is too hard to get. Heaven forfend we should ever get anything without working for it; that is absolutely fatal. But there's no sense in having to perform soul-deadening and grinding toil for it."

"I have all the frills; I never work for them," challenged Burton suddenly. "What about me?"

"You are young and the field of your life is yet in the distance," replied Davenport slowly and soberly. "You have had gifts; but it is not yet the time for you to know that every gift bears its responsibility."

"I—I'm afraid I've never thought of that," faltered Burton in rather a stifled voice after a moment. "But what has the battery to do with this?"

"Why, don't you see? Every invention that reduces the labour necessary to produce things is a step toward that leisure for the race. It's a step toward supplying more frills, besides more abundant necessities, with the same amount of labour."

"Yes, I can see that," acknowledged Burton. She was just the least bit disappointed at so prosaic a culmination to an argument that had aroused her imagination. But his next words rekindled her.

"And this little battery, multiplied a million times," went on Davenport, "means power; power direct, without the human toil and labour now necessary to produce it. Just stop a second and think what is necessary now before we move an inch toward actual production of the few necessaries and the many frills we would like to have. Thousands of men work underground digging coal; thousands more are transporting it, handling it, placing it under boilers. An army is digging or conducting oil wells; another is chopping wood; still another is building dams for water power. And think still further of the vast numbers who manufacture and handle and deliver the implements and instruments by which these raw materials of power are turned into the power itself—steam engines, dynamos and all the rest. It's tremendous!"

Her eyes were wide, staring unseeing down the moonlit aisles. She was seeing—imperfectly, for her experience could not furnish the requisite materials to her incandescent imagination—these swarms of liberated men, coming up grimed from underground, from the factories, from the ends of the earth, dropping the obsolete toils of a clumsy circumvention.

"Millions of them," repeated Davenport, "released for the production of that which our bodies and our souls actually consume."

She was staggered, troubled by the immensity of the detailed problem of all these men.

"They'd lose their jobs," she objected. "Could they get others?"

"It would mean a big readjustment," acknowledged Davenport, "but you must remember that it would not happen all at once. And every big change means a readjustment. The history of industry is full of such readjustments. Every invention that has reduced the amount of labour necessary to produce any given thing has caused such a readjustment. Just look at the things done now by machinery that were done by hand a hundred years ago. Look at the row the cotton gin made, or weaving machinery. Same thing on a smaller scale. In the long run—"

"Yes, the long run," she agreed, "but the present, the immediate present is what I am thinking of."

"It would mean a readjustment," he acknowledged again, "and it would mean hardship and sacrifice in some cases. It is by hardship and sacrifice always that the great things of the world are bought. There is hardship and sacrifice in war, but men undergo it gladly for a cause. There is hardship and sacrifice in pushing out into a wilderness. But always when the hardship

and sacrifice are past, the world has advanced. It is an honour to have been chosen."

"I doubt if the coal miner out of a job would appreciate that fact," she proposed, smiling a little whimsically, a little tenderly, at his exalted face in the moonlight. "It would look to him an undeserved injustice."

"Who of us does appreciate our real benefits?" replied Davenport.

"Benefits?" she repeated doubtfully.

"Yes, our chances."

"I don't believe I understand."

"Our chances to go ahead. The thing done for ourselves at the expense of others sets us back; the thing done for ourselves without harm to others sets us forward a little way; the thing done for others really helps us on."

"I seem to remember cases where people have prospered amazingly at the expense of others," she said, still a little quizzically.

He stared at her in open amazement.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "You aren't one of those people who thinks that all development and all evolution for all eternity are started and finished for keeps in this earth phase of our existence!"

"What do you believe about it?" she countered.

"I know very little of what I believe. It's

too big for me; or any one else. But I do know a few things. I know that when I get out of here I shall go right on working and right on developing through work. And I do know that every time an opportunity comes along and I side-step it, or deliberately do the wrong thing, that opportunity starts at once bearing compound interest against me. Some day I'll have to pay up both that opportunity and the compound interest. No, I don't know how. I've got a lot of beliefs; but those are the only two things I really *know.*"

A little wind came wandering. The girl shivered.

"It's—it's a terrible thought," she faltered.

He laughed.

"Why, no; it's a very inspiring thought," he said. "But we're talking like a prof. in ethics. Point is that even though the readjustment to a world of direct power will be an uneasy one, the end will be worth it. Listen: have you stopped to think even a little in detail what that will mean to human kind? The burden of brutish toil lifted? The lighter, pleasanter, more graceful burden of wholly creative labour substituted?"

He leaned forward, and in his eagerness his boyish, laughing face became grave and mature. With vivid sentences he sketched the world as he saw it: a reorganised world, free to put all

its energies into the positive creation of those things which men's true instincts crave; producing its abundance by honest, sincere, necessary labour, but accomplishing the production without the exhaustion of squalor. It was no impossible utopia; it was no absurd dream of an impossible "equality"; but it was a world of opportunity released from pressure. What men did with the opportunity would still be, as it had always been, a matter for themselves. But no longer would there be any reason or necessity for the submergence under inexorable circumstance of the man whose hands reached toward the stars. That is what he visioned; and that is what Burton, kindling to his ideas, saw too. And as she had not lived with the idea, as had he, and was unaccustomed to it, she was the more eagerly afire.

And through whatever mysterious affinities or harmonies or channels there be, the great Intelligences, one of whose charges is our little earth, felt the vibration, and understood, and were content.

CHAPTER XII

THINGS move by ordered Law, which none may transcend. Effect follows cause and in its turn becomes cause to many more effects. An event wound up by the impetus of an original desire moves straight ahead like a child's mechanical toy across a floor. When the strength of its impetus is exhausted, it runs down. The spending of the impetus we call destiny.

In these mechanics is just one living, outside thing, the Desire. That wound the toy, that started it on its way! The strength of it determined the duration of its run. Without desire nothing happens. I move the smallest muscle of my littlest finger only because I desire, and in pursuance send forth my will. Wherever machinery moves, visible or invisible, following accurately the law of its being, it is because somewhere, somehow, an intelligence has desired and willed. A baby's hand may touch a lever that will release the dynamics of an engine wherein is stored the mighty impetus of a thousand coal miners, mechanics, engineers, inventors. But the baby desired to move its hand.

Destiny is the spending of this impetus, then,

according to inexorable, unchangeable law. But destiny can be altered by the free will of man. It is possible to pick up the mechanical toy and set it down facing in another direction so that it may run on the hardwood floor instead of on the rug. The Law is inexorable; but it may be utilised by those who understand. Thus we must define destiny anew as the spending of impetus unmodified by spiritual consciousness.

So we see the great Intelligences, dimly perceived, never understood, who, I warned you, were characters in our tale, watching the inconceivably tangled working out of the Law on our little earth. Slowly the evolution climbs. Cause and effect; effect and cause again. Never a desire thrown into the world that does not start its impetus in accordance with its strength. Never an impetus that comes to rest unspent. An inextricable web yet slowly growing to a pattern. A hopelessly clashing world; yet gradually defining the harmonies of its fate. A mad confusion; yet imperceptibly working through the Law toward simplicity.

This is the ultimate business of life; the kindling of desire. Otherwise all is dead.

Desire is aroused by pressure, by resistance. Far down in the beginnings of things the cell was awakened by its simple needs of nourishment, of warmth. Dimly, gropingly, it sent forth

its feeble effort of volition to attain them; and so an impetus was born. Æons later mankind fought his more complex pressures—hunger, cold, nakedness—and he fought them desperately, his strength barely sufficing at its utmost to turn the scale in his favour. Yet by the impetus thus generated he rose. It is a profound truth that only by resistance can anything rise. An aeroplane mounts by the resistance of the air. For this reason some particularly intelligent people use the words work and resistance interchangeably.

"I must go forth and seek some resistance," say they; or, "I must go find some work to do," depending on whether the spiritual or the material quality happens to be uppermost in their minds. But it is the same thing; springing from the same necessity; resulting in the same quickening.

At first pressures are crude and heavy; for it is only by the drastic that dull lower forms are aroused. It is a dreadful thing to submit to pressure without being aroused! But as the slow spiral of evolution mounts, one by one the cruder pressures are lifted or lightened. Man improves his environment; he invents; he cooperates. There have been certain crucial periods in the world's history when age-old burdens have fallen. A dozen of them spring to

mind. And always in the last analysis the cause has been in the genius of a man. We have talked of inspiration; and we have been right.

For note you this: our Lords of Life, the great Invisible Intelligences who in their own upward spiral have found for the moment their Resistance in the progress of our little earth—these Invisibles can no more work without the Law than we can. There are no miracles. But this they can do: When they see that in the slow brooding of the ages mankind has reached the point where it seems it can be trusted to go on, to develop its certain impetuses spontaneously without the stimulus of a certain pressure, then they can remove that pressure. How? Some man, brooding beneath the stars, conceives a great idea. We say he was inspired. Thus the mechanical toy is lifted from the floor and set running in a new direction. Thus is the Law assured. Thus, and thus only, does mankind climb slowly and painfully by the sole strength of his self-conceived aspiration. Thus one by one will the difficulties and material struggles of wars and pestilences and grinding toil and poverty and injustice be lifted from us; but only as their usefulness ceases, only as we rise and prove worthy.

Do you see now how our Invisibles—whoever, whatever they may be—are in real truth en-

tered in our tale? An inspiration given; a new thing in the world, new but working as all things must in accordance with law; a great pressure of toil about to vanish as early morning mists vanish before the strengthening rays of the sun.

CHAPTER XIII

BY the campfire Grimstead and his Second in Command talked in low tones.

"What about this, Gardiner?" demanded the Pirate Chief as soon as the young people were out of hearing. "It sounds like the most insane thing I ever heard. Sounds like perpetual motion. But this young fellow has a way of calling the turn—"

"There's no real scientific reason why he hasn't got it," stated Gardiner, "any more than there's any real scientific reason why, if there are spirits, they shouldn't communicate with us in certain conditions. We simply don't believe either of them because it hasn't been scientifically proved to us that they have."

"In other words it's possible, but not probable; and we're from Missouri," said Grimstead.

"Exactly. It is well known that the earth lies in a vast magnetic field and that that magnetic field means power. Trouble is to isolate your generating—or rather transforming—apparatus."

"Huh?" ejaculated Grimstead.

"Well, suppose you sunk a bottle without a

cork a few thousand feet into the sea. At that depth there is tremendous pressure—enough to crush in a thick steel shell—and of course such a force is power. But sink your bottle with a cork in it, and very promptly that cork will be forced in. The thing that forced it is, of course, power. What you've done is to get *outside* of your source of power. Same thing here. We're in this magnetic field, but we're all soaked up with it. If we could get outside it, or, rather, get it outside us, we could use it. If this fellow has anything, he's done just that."

"Then you think it possible?"

"I didn't say so. I said merely that it is not scientifically impossible."

"Well, that we can soon determine. I'm glad you've got this fool bet. It will give you a good excuse to keep close tabs on the whole thing. This may prove important, Gardiner, and I want you to make it your business while we are here to stay on the job. It is business; and it might conceivably amount to a big thing for both of us."

"I shall not leave the place while the test is on."

"It will pay to make no mistakes. You will of course be taken care of if the thing's any good."

Gardiner nodded.

"Well, so much for that. Simmins," Grim-

stead addressed that silent person, "do you suppose you could find me some worms in the morning?"

"Worms, sir?" repeated Simmins incredulously.

"Yes, worms. The kind the robins pull up. Fishing worms."

"I could not say, I am sure, sir," said Simmins with hauteur.

"Well, you dig around the wet places and see. I want a nice little can full."

Simmins disdained reply. It was no part of the duties either of a butler or of a chauffeur, as he understood them, to furnish worms to anybody. Feeding Punketty-Snivvles was as low as he'd got up to date, and that was only in deference to Miss Burton. The bright and hilarious thought came to him that he might advise Grimstead to use Punketty-Snivvles for bait instead of worms; and he dramatised delightfully in great detail just his own manner of haughty dignity leavened with dry humour and the astonished appreciation of his employer.

"You are right, Simmins," rejoined the latter, "such menial tasks are beneath the dignity of one like yourself. I should never have asked it, and I offer my apologies. The request was proffered without thought."

Whereupon Grimstead, by way of emphasis-

ing his excuses, offered Simmins one of his dollar cigars—with the flavour of which, by the way, Simmins was already thoroughly familiar.

Fortunately there was another side of Simmins that advised his not staging the drama. That side was practical and had a vision of its own. So after savouring his triumph for a few moments Simmins put it away in cold storage and substituted another speech of enquiry as to how early worms would be needed. Simmins led a hidden life of haughty and scornful repudiation and revolt, always successful. But he always went and did it.

He went and did it the next morning, though he wanted intensely to be in on the mysterious rites at the car. Rapscallion was sorry for him, and as Simmins was apparently engaged in doggy business, the terrier helped him dig. The ground was soft and it was very good digging, though the motive for excavation was obscure. Sniff as he might Rapscallion could get no faintest whiff of ground squirrel, mole or gopher. He told this to Simmins, but the poor goof went right on digging just the same. Thereupon Rapscallion also went right on digging, though he knew perfectly it was hopeless; for such is the fine courtesy of dogs. Punketty-Snivvles slavishly copied his hero as far as he was able. He had never dug before. His long silky hair

became matted with wet earth; his beady eyes sparkled, he yapped shrilly and continuously to the effect that he was having the time of his life. This caused both Simmins and Rapscallion to look upon him bitterly. How could any sane being have the time of his life at such a futile occupation?

However, there were worms. A sufficient quantity was secured about the hour it came time to move camp. The famous battery, lashed to the running board, had been connected up with the self-starter which was now turning over in the laborious and vociferous manner peculiar to the species. Grimstead and Gardiner were inclined to stand and watch it in fascination; but Davenport was quite unimpressed.

"That's all there is to it," said he. "Now all we have to watch out for is that she doesn't run dry of lubrication. Simmins can keep track of that."

He turned away.

"Now we've got a good morning's work in front of us," he announced cheerfully. "I picked a good place for camp, before breakfast. We must move camp, and then we must make a start on our road out."

"I'm going fishing this afternoon," warned Grimstead.

Davenport laughed.

"And I'm going walking back to the ridge,

with Miss Burton if she cares to go, to see how the rhododendrons are making it."

"Rhododendrons? Real rhododendrons? Like those in the Park?" cried Burton.

"The same."

"Well," growled Grimstead, "I don't see why we shouldn't get at it. Simmins ought to be able to move camp. Here, Simmins, you move the tent down, and my things, and Miss Burton's and Mr. Davenport's. Fix up a good camp, like this one. You and Mr. Gardiner are to stay here."

"Sir," answered Simmins with entire respect, but very firmly, "it is true I take your wage, but in the wildwood it is immemorial custom that all men are equal and perform their equal shares of the daily tasks. It is true also that a leader or directing head is necessary to any co-operation; and I am entirely willing to obey the command of such a leader. But I submit that that leader should be the one best qualified to command. Mr. Davenport is our logical captain. I will cheerfully carry out his decisions, even should, as in the present instance, they prove distasteful."

This speech Simmins translated into, "Yes, sir, very good, sir," and at once set about his task.

The others followed Davenport to the willow

bottom where they all set busily to work cutting poles and dragging them out onto the meadow. Burton hung about them for a while, then wandered away in the direction of Simmins' activities and was seen no more. Out in the little meadow the big car quivered under the slow rhythmical impulse of the whirling self-starter, which shrieked its high song. From time to time Grimstead or Gardiner, after dropping a load of poles, would look at it for a few seconds, a growing wonder in their eyes. About mid-morning Grimstead said:

"I don't need any four-day test to show me this is a big thing. If it stopped right now, exhausted, played out, it would be a big thing. How much of a fool do you make out this young man is?"

"He's the crazy up-in-the-air gambling kind of fool," replied Gardiner contemptuously.

"About ten thousand dollars' worth, hey, Ross?" grinned the Chief. "But I get you."

When the sun was overhead Davenport called a halt and they all went to the stream's edge to wash and cool off. Grimstead eyed the rushing waters critically.

"By George, she looks to me as though she were going down!" he cried hopefully. "Wouldn't you say that the water is clearing, Davenport?"

"Undoubtedly," encouraged the young man, "but if I were you I'd stick to worms or a spinner just for to-day."

"I'm going to," assured Grimstead; "some of these thirty-three degree cranks won't fish with anything but a fly, but who am I to deny an honest trout what he wants?"

They returned to camp. Simmins had really done remarkably well. He was an adaptable, an observant creature, and he had watched Davenport minutely the day before. A certain faint pride might have been discovered in him by a closely observant bystander. A blatant, flushed, unashamed pride could not fail to be remarked on the glowing countenance of Burton. The cause of that was not apparent until Simmins, bringing the camp kettles to the edge of the spread tarpaulin, announced in reply to a careless compliment:

"No, sir; not I, sir. Miss Burton did the cooking, sir."

Davenport merely smiled at her with a vague commendation. But if the kettles had exploded like so many trench mortars the effect on Grimstead could not have been more devastating. His eyes popped, his mouth opened, his breath came quickly.

"You'll have apoplexy, dad," cried Burton impatiently. "Try it; it isn't as bad as all that."

Grimstead subsided and helped himself; but he continued to shake his head and mutter, and from time to time he was seen to examine closely the food and to sniff at it in a manner that brought a bright flush to his daughter's cheeks.

This was the more ready because, when all is said and done, the said food was no better than passable. As evidence of willing intention it was superb; but as proof of culinary skill there was somewhat to be desired. Perfectly edible, you understand, capable of sustaining life, and even moderately palatable to men who had been working in the open air; but a little the sort to which one would not care to invite an enemy—or would, depending on whether pride or vindictiveness was uppermost. Burton had worked very hard over what seemed to be a simple matter, and her mood was dangerous, even before her father's silly performance.

"By Jove," Davenport was saying, "it certainly is a comfort to come in off work and find a meal waiting for you instead of having to turn in and rustle it yourself. You're a public benefactor, Miss Burton."

She looked at him gratefully.

"I'm afraid it isn't very good," she confessed, "but I did the best I could. Simmins"—she flashed a glance of scorn at that individual—"claims he knows nothing about cooking."

"Nothing whatever, miss," corroborated Simmins firmly.

"Indeed?" commented Davenport. "Well, we'll teach him. Nothing like a knowledge of open-air cooking for an accomplishment, Simmins. Very valuable to you."

"Yes, sir," murmured Simmins, crushed.

"Open-air cookery," pursued Davenport largely, as though dealing in generalities, "is quite a trick in itself. The best cooks on a stove have practically to begin all over again. There are little tricks about it that you can get only with experience. Hot fire, and currents of air and all that sort of thing. Now take rice." He waved an explanatory spoon. "Seems as if the dumb stuff *would* stick to the bottom and burn or else come out watery. Yet it's very simple."

"Drat the rice!" interrupted Burton with heartfelt fervency. "That's what happened to mine—*both!*"

"Well, next time try this. Take just four cupfuls of salted water. When it is boiling hard put in a cupful of rice. At once clap on the cover and put a good big rock on top. Leave it for exactly twenty-two minutes; not a minute more or less. Then it's done. There'll be no water left; the rice will be soft and plump, and it won't be burned."

"Don't you stir it?" asked Burton.

"No. The confined steam does that."

"I should think—"

"I've done it hundreds of times. It works," he assured her smilingly. "There are a lot of little kinks like that; and they are quite interesting. Stick around when I undertake Simmins' education."

"I will," she cried gaily. She was deeply grateful for the tactful manner with which the young man had relieved the situation. None of her acquaintance could have done it better. Burton confessed to a growing interest and respect in the capabilities of a self-made young garage mechanic. She had always looked on them as probably skilful, but rather coarse and ignorant, and certainly dirty. That was as far as she had gone.

The meal finished, Grimstead was all eagerness to be off. Davenport advised some large pools near the break of land, which he would find down stream a mile or so. He departed sturdily. Gardiner said he thought he would take a snooze on the boughs at the other camp. Davenport drew Simmins aside and conversed with him low-voiced for a while; in consequence of which, after the dishes had been washed, Simmins also retired to the old camp.

CHAPTER XIV

THE two young people plunged into the forest, Davenport leading the way. Rapscallion cut wide, interrogatory circles around them. Punketty-Snivvles attempted to follow, but was sternly ordered back. The inextricable web of cause and effect we call chance decreed that Gardiner should be standing nearest; that upon Gardiner's unenthusiastic care Punketty-Snivvles should be bestowed by Burton. After they had resumed their walk they could hear the little beast's shrill, yapping protest, as nagging to the nerves as the reiterated cry of the fever owl in the African jungle. The yapping suddenly ended by a squeak of anguish. Punketty-Snivvles had been well swatted, and that swat had added Gardiner to his list of enemies. In the slow revolving of the incidents and accidents that make up our story this enmity had important results. Punketty-Snivvles was a true Bourbon in that he never learned and never forgot.

Davenport led the way skilfully on ever-rising ground, following the faint, mossy half-trace of what was a water course only when rain was

actually falling. It afforded comparatively clear footing through the lofty bracken, dogwood and smaller thicket which spread beneath the redwood giants like a carpet with a nap ten feet high! The sun, searching in turn with its slanting shafts and arrows every aisle and pocket of the forest, had thoroughly warmed the air. A thousand odours thus released drifted like butterflies idly here and there, fluttering against the senses and away again; smell of hot evergreen needles, smell of lush, green, over-warm things, smell of damp, dark, uprooted earth, smell of the cool of running water, and the faint, unguessable, elusive little perfumes too shy to make themselves fully known. These were the busiest and most numerous of the woods creatures, these odours, making the most of the brief hours of their release by the sun warmth before the chill of evening should banish them again. But with them were also busy, small, scratching birds making two-clawed swoops at the humus under fern or underbrush; and equally busy, small, searching birds who would look you both sides of every twig and leaf of a bush before you could say knife, and keep a bright eye on you all the time. Likewise there were buzzing and droning insects that either flew in straight lines to distant parts, or that hovered in swarms, darting erratically back and forth within a limited space as though

dancing in the sun. All through the forest carpet—whose nap, be it remembered, was ten feet thick—was life, busy and small and charming and self-centred. But when the eye was raised one saw again only great fluted columns, and still awe, and cathedral lights slanting. The Forest, like an aloof, benign god, watched and brooded while her creatures lived.

Shortly the hill rose more steeply, and here was a patch of the gorgeous rhododendrons they had come to see. A dim old woods road, long unused, led through it, and this they followed. It led finally to a sunny, azalea-bordered, natural clearing of several acres, grass grown, with scattered bushes. Here and there, at irregular and widely distributed intervals, grew scrubby and gnarled old apple trees. These, a number of stumps, and the half-obliterated road by which they had come, were the only traces of some long past attempt to reclaim for human use this little spot in the wilderness.

The sun here was warm and pleasant. Bees hummed and hesitated over the wild flowers. They sat on the ground, leaning against one of the ancient stumps.

"Tell me about yourself," she interjected suddenly into a desultory speculation as to the man who had planted the apple trees.

"I was born of poor but honest parents—"

"No! No! Please don't be silly! I want to know."

"What particularly, Oh Lady?"

"I want to know how you knew so accurately about the rain and the tree falling and all the rest of that. And I want to know about the battery and how you came to make it. It was something the same thing, wasn't it?"

He stared at her.

"Why do you say that?" he asked at last.

"I don't know; I feel it. Please tell me; I do want to know."

He hesitated a moment; then abruptly took his decision.

"I'll try," he promised, "but I don't know very clearly myself. I've never tried to express it."

He hesitated again, seeking for an opening.

"Did you ever read Maeterlinck's 'Life of the Bee'?" he enquired. "Or any of Fabre's insect books?"

"I've read the 'Bee' and one of Fabre's—the one where the Emperor moth—"

"Yes, I know. Well, that gives us a start. Now bees, and especially ants, have what you might call a co-operative government that is as complicated and a lot more intelligent and efficient than any human government. I'm just taking them as a sample; the same thing applies all through nature. Creatures work, inside their

own needs, with an intelligence that beats ours a calendar mile. Sometimes, as in the case of the ant and the bee, it is a very complicated intelligence. If a man were required to sit down and plan out on paper all the political ramifications of a system of government like the ant's he would have to be possessed of a very high degree of brain power, and he'd have to use it. How come?"

"Instinct," replied Burton promptly.

"Sure thing. But that just sticks in a word as a stop-gap. No, get down and look at it closely. You would hardly go so far as to say that an ant is an intellectual creature; that he, or any of his ancestors or fellows, has a brain that could think out and put in operation a system of government. Yet he acts with a heap more intelligence than most men do—on the average. How come?"

"I don't know."

"Neither do I; but I surmise. Suppose for the sake of argument that in the void all about and through us is a saturate solution of all possible knowledge and wisdom. The things we call living creatures live in this; it is all around us; but we are more or less cut off from it by the fact that we are individual and imperfect beings. We are in shells, let us say; particular wisdom

or knowledge gets to us only through special cracks. A perfect being would have a point of contact for every possible knowledge or wisdom. But in our finite world every individual, whether it is a rock or a tree or an ant, is so built that he can come in contact only with the particular little piece of wisdom or intelligence from the great store that he needs in his business. All the rest of the points of contact are blocked off by his individual structure. Thus within his limits he has perfect knowledge. The limits may be extremely narrow, as in the case of a tree. The tree knows only what to do when soil is poor, or there is a dry season, or any of the ordinary tree things; but he is absolutely sure and wise as to them. He doesn't know one earthly thing about anything else."

"I never thought of a tree as wise," commented Burton.

"He is very wise—in what he knows. Similarly the ants. They have access to the universal wisdom along lines of contact that have to do with government by co-operation; and in that they are admirably and universally wise. The current flows through certain holes and turns certain wheels, and is everywhere else blocked off. It's the same all through nature. How do you suppose quail know ahead of time whether

the season is to be dry or wet, and breed accordingly? The more you think of it the more instances you will perceive."

"It's fascinating," she cried.

"Point is," he summed up, "having no 'intellect,' in our sense of the word, these lower creatures are unobstructed channels. Cause and effect are absolutely clear to them; but only the cause and effect that have to do with their own normal kind of life; and the wise thing to do in that cause and effect automatically becomes known to them."

"But hold on!" objected Burton. "How about accidents? They are absolutely the result of causes and effects. Why doesn't your ant see that I'm going to step on his hill, and move?"

"Simply because it *is* an accident, as I make it out. He is equipped for the normal causes and effects of his life; not for the abnormal."

"That is the most interesting thing I ever heard!" breathed Burton. "And it sounds so reasonable! But you know we started to talk about you, not about ants. I believe you are a crafty side-stepper!"

"We're headed toward me. I think I should like to have you understand."

"I think I do understand the idea," rejoined Burton slowly, "but I don't know that I quite accept it. It would seem, according to that, that

the lower in the scale of life you got the wiser you were."

"The wiser you are inside your limitations," corrected Davenport, "our limitations are wider than those of the ant. But let's not get into philosophy; let's stick to the main subject, and that, I believe, is Me."

He said this in a manner to bring a laugh, but Burton did not smile.

"It is very interesting," she said slowly. "I have a slight suspicion it is highbrow." At last she laughed. "Think of me being highbrow! Annette Colton would fall dead!"

"Well, as I see it," Davenport resumed, "if things were all working along the way they should, man would have this same access to universal wisdom that the lower creatures have, only more so, because he is a higher and more complicated being. He would not be wholly wise, of course, and he would make mistakes and bump against accidents, just as the ants and bees do; and they would be more colossal mistakes and gaudier accidents because they would be on a different scale. But as respects all the things he would normally run against in his everyday normal life he would see, or feel—perceive is a better word—the causes and effects and results; because the stream of life would flow through him by certain channels turning certain wheels."

"That's what you do!" she cried excitedly. "I see!"

"In a very small and practical way; a little more than the average. People have just about lost that power. They have little remnants of it. You've heard of premonitions that have worked out; or a 'feeling' that some one was in the room; or experienced some one of the numerous 'coincidences,' such as receiving a letter right on top of some especial thought of the person who wrote it. You may have had dreams that came true."

"Yes," she cried, "what about it?"

"You probably thought of all this as 'uncanny.' It wasn't uncanny at all. Simply old, choked channels letting through a trickle."

She pondered this a moment, her brows puckered prettily.

"Is it our fault—this choking?" she asked. "How did it happen?"

"I don't *know,* of course; but I surmise," he repeated. "It is the intervention of mind, of intellect. The ant has practically no mind, as we know it, and so he responds literally unthinkingly to what comes through him. Mankind, at the present time, doesn't respond unthinkingly to anything. Rather he responds to his thinking."

"That sounds deep," she objected, "and surely the human intellect—"

"Yes, I know and I agree—noblest work of God and all that. But we've got the thing upside down, the cart before the horse. How we ever began to hitch 'em up that way, I don't know. Natural perversity, fall of man and all that sort of thing, I suppose."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Well," he explained, "the ant has legs, and pincers and eyes and all those things; and they are practically tools to carry out the especial wisdom of life, the desirable reactions, he gets from that part of the great current that flows through him. That clear?"

"Yes."

"All right. Well, man's intellect also was intended to be merely a tool to handle and carry out the especial wisdom of life, the desirable reactions, he gets from the current. It's a fine tool, and complicated. But it was supposed to be only a tool for the purpose of examining and making practical what came to it by direct channel. Mankind got so tickled with it that he began to run himself and all his affairs by it alone. That blocked the channel. The mind took control, instead of working under control. Result is we're getting more and more mixed up and complicated. Instead of playing with a nice fresh supply of first hand—well, call it inspiration; that's what it is—we make over and

refashion old stuff. If it weren't for the fact that some people's channels are not completely blocked, so that a kind of a trickle does get through; and if it wasn't for an occasional crazy genius who busts out, we'd tie ourselves up in our minds and dry up and blow away."

She was leaning forward, her eyes shining, her cheeks red with the excitement of a new fundamental idea. Burton's life was not one prolific of fundamental ideas. For the moment she comprehended by means rather of her inner perception than by an ordered process of mind. With true instinct she reached toward the individual instance.

"Then," she summed up slowly, "you could tell about the rain and the tree falling because this current flowed through you."

"That's roughly it."

"How do you do it?"

"It's hard to say. I set my mind aside and then take what comes to me."

"Comes to you? How? In words?"

"No. I just know things. There they are."

"But there are so many things—"

"Things swarm all about us, trees, flowers, grasses, birds, insects, lights, shadows, all sorts of things. Yet they have absolutely no existence as far as you are concerned until you turn your

attention to them. I turn my attention to the type of thing that is useful for me to know."

"Like a searchlight," she nodded thoughtfully. "That's what you did the other night in regard to the weather and the tree."

"The weather, yes; the tree was incidental. There are some things that have to do with danger that force themselves on the attention. I don't pretend to understand it very well. What I've told you is of course just the explanation I've figured out."

"Can you do it any time?"

"Why, of course. Just as I can open my mouth at any time. Why not? Unless, of course, there is something going on so distracting that my mind simply refuses to be set aside."

"Show me, then," she demanded eagerly. "Do it now!"

"All right," he agreed. "I feel a little silly showing off that kind of a thing. Most people would think me crazy. But what kin I do fer you, kind Lady?" he mimicked. "Cross me palm with silver."

He held out his hand wheedlingly. Laughing, she fumbled in her pocket, and at last produced a five-cent piece. He looked at it doubtfully.

"That's not silver; it's nickel," he accused. "But never mind; I'm good-natured. What do you want to know?"

"Tell me just how many trout father will catch."

He shook his head.

"Your guess is every bit as good as mine," said he. "You see, your father's catching trout has nothing to do with normal average human life."

"It's the accident!" she cried joyously. "I'll have to tell father that!"

"Not from me!" he warned.

"Well," she considered, "tell me just what Simmins will be doing at nine o'clock to-night."

Davenport shook his head.

"You don't get the limits of this thing, either for ants or humans. All we really get is cause and effect, and the complicated trend of it. There's one thing that can upset the show about every clip, and that is human free will. An intelligence with enough wisdom to understand the law of cause and effect absolutely accurately in all its complications could make you a prediction of almost any nature, and it would come out, *provided* some fellow didn't come along with his free will and modify the whole sequence in some way and start another chain of causes and effects. I could perceive that the tree was going to fall probably because a great many great and small causes were just about to culminate in the natural course of events. But for the life of me I couldn't tell you when or whether any

tree is going to be cut down by an axeman. Do you get the difference?"

"I think so."

"Well, anything else within that limitation."

"I believe," said she suddenly, "I'll leave it to you. Do something startling. You don't mind, do you? It isn't being—being—well, irreverent in any way?"

He shouted with laughter.

"Irreverent! Where did you get that idea? There's nothing mysterious or sacred or occult about any of this any more than there is about your digestion. It's a simple natural thing. I wouldn't like to show off before people ordinarily, any more than I'd like to stand on my head; but I'd just as soon stand on my head if it will amuse my intimate friends. The lady wants something startling," he mused. "Wonder what the modern débutante considers startling!"

"Don't be silly; and I'm not a débutante."

"I beg your pardon. That of course alters the situation. Simple yet startling demonstration of the man's powers."

He pondered for a moment.

"I think perhaps the simplest is the best," he decided. "Now on the other side of the stump is a large ant hill—I noticed it as we came in. Suppose you go around there and get an eye on it while I get going."

She arose, shook her skirts, and circled the stump. Davenport sat up straight, and for the second time since the beginning of these adventures his eyes took on the peculiar, far-away, glassy-surfaced stare. After about half a minute he began to speak.

"The shadow of this stump at this moment just reaches the outermost edge of the ant hill. In a second or so it will be in sunlight. Just now the ant hill seems to be deserted. When the sun falls on it a lone soldier-ant will come out from the second orifice counting from the north. As he reaches the top of the hole a large grain of sand—about small boulder size to him—will roll under him and he will have to recover his balance with an effort. He will be followed after a second or so by five worker ants who will turn to the eastward and disappear in the grass. Before they are out of sight, however, quite a number will come out and scatter in various directions, but four of them will climb up the stub. There is something to eat on the top of the stub and they are going to get it. Two of them will get it to the edge, one pushing and one pulling; and once there the other two will tie in and help."

"What is there to eat on the stub?" she enquired.

"I don't know. Something inanimate. That's

enough. Now have you got that clearly in mind?"

"Better than that; I've got it on paper," she called.

He fished out a stubby pipe and a plug of tobacco from which he began to whittle a charge. On the other side the stump from time to time he heard little excited exclamations. At the end of five minutes she appeared, her cheeks flushed with excitement.

"Check up?" he enquired amusedly.

"Perfectly," she cried. "It's the most wonderful thing I ever heard of! It's—it's clairvoyance, isn't it?"

"Mildewed word. Stop gap," he corrected. "Doesn't make you understand things to label them with words, though most people think a thing is explained once it's named something. It sounds mysterious, but it is again nothing but cause and effect. The physical arrangement of facts brought automatically conditions to which the various ants reacted through their instincts—the parts of the current of wisdom that flowed through the channels provided in ants."

"Did you actually *see* those things going to happen?"

"No. I just knew them; I had a conviction. I put my mind aside and sat still and they just came into my mind. It's hard to describe."

"I think I understand—a little. I've had things come to me that way, once in a blue moon. Won't you tell me how you first experienced it, and whether you developed it?"

He blew a cloud of smoke and looked at her through quizzically narrowed eyes.

"Most as amusing as the Orpheum," said he drily.

"No! No!" she denied with vehemence. "I want to know!"

"Why?" he demanded.

She calmed, and looked a little confused.

"Why—why—you're right, I suppose I am prying. I beg your pardon—but I *did* want to know."

He laughed comfortably.

"I'll tell you all I know gladly—which isn't much," he promised, "because you really do want to know. You must pardon me, but in my time I've been up against fake débutante enthusiasm."

"I told you I'm not a débutante!" she cried indignantly. "And I'll have you understand I'm not to be humoured like a child."

"Now don't go away mad!" he coaxed, half-humorously, but with an undertone of pleading sincerity that arrested her half movement. "I meant not to offend your gracious majesty. But also I have a skittish horror of being made a goat. I really enjoy talking about myself—I'm

quite a normal young man—but only when I'm sure I'm not being made fun of. Let's see, you wanted to know how this thing started."

"Yes," she eyed him doubtfully, "but please do not feel—"

"No, I don't," he interrupted her firmly, "whatever it is. When I was a youngster I discovered by accident that I had a queer faculty of being able to move around in the dark freely and without hitting things as long as I kept my mind blank, or let it just idle along. For instance, coming home through the woods at night, I'd turn out for trees or avoid thickets or step over stones that I could not see at all; and furthermore I'd land accurately in camp. That, mind you, was only as long as I didn't think about it consciously. The minute I'd think whether I ought to turn to the right or left, or wonder whether I wasn't going to hit a tree, or something, I'd begin to bump and blunder."

"That's the way it started. Then what?"

"Why, then, nothing. I just thought of it as a handy kink in my make up. But when I grew up and began to think about things more I began to see certain connections between that faculty and the way things worked out in my profession. To get any 'furderer' with this I've got to talk shop outrageously. Do you mind?"

"Of course not! I'd love it!"

"Well, most people think that when a man writes a story—"

"Oh!" she cried, taken aback. "Do you write stories?"

"I so understand from sufficient outside authority to overcome my own natural scepticism."

She stared at him intently but abstractedly, as a tremendous suspicion took her mind.

"You aren't—you aren't *Lawrence* Davenport!" she said incredulously.

"Friends call me Larry," he acknowledged.

"Not *the* Lawrence Davenport?"

"I'm the only one I know about. There may be others I wot not of; but be assured, O Lady, that they are nothing but spurious imitations."

"Why, I've read all your books—"

"You are very patient."

"—and I've just *loved* them!"

"Long and patient study has not yet revealed to me the suitable answer to one who claims she loves your books," sadly confessed Davenport.

Burton began to chuckle, then to laugh aloud. This continued so long that Davenport knit his brows at her.

"Even my famous wit—" he began.

"I'm thinking of the joke on us," she explained, wiping her eyes, "of Dad. We thought you were a garage mechanic!"

Davenport looked genuinely astonished.

"And me with such gentlemanly manners," he mourned, "and my plug tobacco is for smoking, not chewing; and my diction, faulty as it is, yet observes the rules of grammar. And my raiment while not sumptuous—"

"Your funny little car misled us, I suppose," she explained, "and then you were so handy about everything."

"You relieve me. The car was the cheapest I could get for a pure experiment. Its strangely horrific disguise was imposed by its former owner. I had not thought of it. But it does signify, now that I consider it; much as long visored caps signify, or 'college cut' clothes. But I am glad I was handy."

"But go on about the battery," she ordered.

"Do you know," he said admiringly, "my respect for you becomes profounder every moment. You have an admirable directness and pertinacity; and your short cuts of intuition are a delight. We *were* talking about the battery a few centuries ago, weren't we?"

"We've been talking about the battery right along, and you know it," said she.

"Well, as I was saying: most people imagine that when a man writes a story he sits down and invents it with the front part of his brain, the way you'd sit down and make a list of something: that he decides that this character will do this,

and that character will do that and that the whole plot will do so-and-so."

"Doesn't he?"

"He may think he does; but he doesn't. What he really does is this: he either has a situation, or a central ethical idea, or one or more characters. He makes a start. Then one by one the situations, the telling points and even the trend of conversations come into his mind, and he picks them out. He doesn't do any *thinking* at all, in the way a mathematician invents a theorem. He just keeps his story in his consciousness, so to speak; and things form. There may be alternatives from which he has to make a choice, but that's as far as he gets. It's hard to name. It isn't thinking: it certainly isn't dreaming idly, for there is very active volition in it."

"Subconscious mind," she suggested.

"Mildewed word. Another example of thinking you've explained when you've merely named. But there's one thing that can be said: the minute you try to take hold of it and drag it out with your mathematical mind before it's ready, you get to be second rate. The mathematical part must be on the job to do a workmanlike job and keep the congruities, mind you."

She nodded slowly. "I think I see dimly where you're coming out."

"I'm sure you do. Well, I noticed that my

old experience in the dark and this story writing had one thing in common: the more or less holding in abeyance of the sharply reasoning mind. From then on it was practice."

"And the battery?"

"Came to me just like a story, a little at a time. I'm no mechanic, and I have no scientific education. No one could be worse fitted than I to be an inventor. But, like any one else, I couldn't help noticing from time to time the incredible amount of power everywhere going to waste, and the equally incredible exertions we have to make to get hold of what little power we do use. Just think of the amount of power necessary to raise and lower the tides; or to deliver millions of waves on the beach; or, indeed, to warm a single acre of land to the growing point. And of course we're just beginning to use water power."

"Yes," she urged him as he paused.

"Then one day when I was filling the starting battery of my car—I *have* got a car—it struck me what a nuisance it was, and I wondered if we couldn't get a battery that would work with air."

"And then you figured it out."

"I did not," he disclaimed. "I merely kept it in mind, the way I do a story, and it worked out its own plot, bit by bit. Every once in a while I'd try it, just the way I'd try a story plot, and it wouldn't work; so I'd quit it, and keep it in

mind again, and wait for another bright idea. It took me some time to tumble to the fact that the plates had to be just exactly so far apart. I got a current—mainly by accident—and it worked well for two or three days. Then all at once it quit on me. I found afterwards that probably the plates got jarred a little. It took me three weeks to get on the right track. Then one day I said to myself, 'Oh, yes, a micrometer screw.' "

"But you've succeeded at last!"

"To a certain extent, anyway. There's a lot to be considered—whether a number of batteries will all work together, for instance. But at least I've got two to work and to work hard for a long time. One horrible thought occurred to me: that maybe it will only work near electric plants already in operation under the old methods."

"Stealing what's already been made! I see!"

"That's why I'm up in this wild country, bag and baggage. I'm going to get far enough away to find out. It seems to be all right, though."

He glanced toward the west.

"I'll go back on my statement a while back," said he, "and I'll tell you accurately what the members of this party are doing. Your father is headed toward camp: and Simmins and Gardiner are getting hungry and wondering where we all are. Isn't that right, Rapscallion?"

The red-dog uncurled, yawned and stretched: then announced himself game for anything.

They returned to camp down the old wood road. The evening shadows were crouching close to earth, stealing back and forth like players in concealment waiting the moment to rise and take the stage. Hermit thrushes were proclaiming holiness. They walked in a spell that was unbroken until the campfire flickered through the trees.

"You don't know how I appreciate your telling me all this, Mr. Davenport," then said she.

"I told you my friends call me Larry," he pointed out: then at her slight withdrawal, "Oh, I know we're supposed to be recent acquaintances and all that; but we're not really, and you know it. But it isn't that. I speak from a sense of the appropriate. Now really, look at me. Am I a Larry looking person or a Davenport looking person?" He cocked his eye comically in her direction.

She laughed.

"You're right—Larry," said she.

CHAPTER XV

GRIMSTEAD did not appear until the twilight was ten feet deep on the forest floor; although the sun still painted with green-bronze the tops of certain trees. He tramped into camp savagely, without response to greetings, hung his rod from a projecting nub on a tree, threw his creel from him, and plumped himself down by the fire.

"Get any fish, Dad?" Burton had the temerity to ask.

Grimstead grunted and bit off the end of his cigar.

"I had a notion it was too soon after the rain," observed Gardiner. "They never bite until the water has cleared more."

"I suppose you wouldn't have gone fishing?" Grimstead enquired of him with mock politeness.

"I certainly should not," replied Gardiner, unmoved.

"Rather listen to about five hundred dollars' worth of self-starter music," sneered Grimstead. "I hear she's still going strong. You got anything to say about what a damn fool I was to go fishing?" he enquired of Davenport.

"Not a word," smiled Larry.

"I suppose you wouldn't have gone fishing so soon after the rain, either?" persisted Grimstead.

"Depends on how much I wanted to go fishing," replied Larry.

"Humph!" grunted the Pirate Chief. His roving eye rested on Simmins. "How about you, Simmins?" he enquired with heavy sarcasm. "I suppose you wouldn't have gone fishing to-day, either?"

"Yes, sir, quite so, sir," said Simmins.

Having silenced all the guns within range, Grimstead lighted his cigar.

"Well, hang up my creel somewhere," he commanded, "and bring me some dry things for my feet."

Simmins glided to where lay the discarded creel. He lifted it; then, with a surprised air, lifted the cover and peered within. An exclamation escaped him which was immediately succeeded by a squawk of alarm. Grimstead, with an incredible agility in one so bulky, had leaped to his feet, rushed upon him, and snatched the creel from his grasp. Gone now was the scowl, shaken the grouch. His face illumined with a grin of triumph, Grimstead pranced to the fireside, pacing high like an Indian dancer.

"Too soon after the rain!" he chanted derisive-

ly, shaking the creel over his head. "Never bite until the water is clear! Yow!"

He reached into the creel and drew out inch by inch a fair leviathan of a trout, which he held by a finger in the gills and shook in their faces as an Indian shakes his rattle of pebbles.

"Look at 'um!" he shouted. "I'll betcha he weighs six pounds! I'll betcha he's two foot and a half long! I'll betcha you never saw a trout like that before! Won't bite, eh! Oh, *no!* You know that big pool down about a mile below the fallen redwood?" he asked Larry. "Well, I got down there along about half-past four or five o'clock. Hadn't had a bite, not a smell. Then I began to use the old bean—"

"Who is the one who objects to my being slangy?" interrupted Burton mischievously.

But he brushed her aside. Shaking the big rainbow in their faces to emphasise each point, Grimstead went on with his narration. He told every detail, and he circled and told certain of the most triumphant details over again. The adventure of catching this certain fish became an adventure which only a person of Grimstead's capacity could have brought to a successful conclusion; indeed, only to one like Grimstead would discriminating fates have offered it at all. When at length the landing net lifted the prize from the water, the narrator about-faced and started to

tell it all over again in reverse order; but Burton cut him short.

"Now, Dad," she said decidedly. "You give that trout to Simmins and you get ready for supper. We're all famished. It's a beauty, but we'd like to see how it tastes. Simmins, take the fish and clean it."

Grimstead came off the boil, but he still simmered pleasingly, and continued to impart embellishing particulars to the world at large while he prepared to tidy himself up for the meal. Rapscallion stepped forward to where the trout dangled from the horrified Simmins, took one dainty sniff, and retired in disgust. The smell of raw trout was not disagreeable to Rapscallion except by association. He knew by experience that now he would be expected to begin a fish diet and Rapscallion considered himself no sledge dog.

Davenport caught Simmins' distressed eye and arose.

"Clean it down stream, Simmins, below where we use the water," said he, and disappeared in the direction of the cars.

Simmins, taking heart, stumbled toward the creek holding the trout gingerly away from him. Sure enough he was joined by his benefactor.

"Very few fish on the dry South African veldt, I understand, Simmins," remarked Larry drily.

"Quite so, sir."

"So I surmise you don't really know whether they clean trout with a scrubbing brush or a feather duster. That right?"

"The establishments in which I have taken service have always maintained young persons of inferior station to perform such duties, sir."

Davenport surveyed him thoughtfully.

"Simmins," he said sadly, "you mustn't pull that stuff on me; you really mustn't. You see, I'm on. I'd like to help you save your face, you poor nut; but I'm not going to do it if you try to bluff me. I know it's hard: you've got the habit. But why try it on a garage man?"

Simmins looked unconvinced.

"Shoot!" commanded Larry, "what you keeping back?"

"You may be a garage man, sir, but I doubt it. You are a gentleman."

"What's that?"

But Simmins refused to analyse.

"One like yourself, sir," said he neatly.

Larry shouted.

"Well played, Simmins. But now get back to earth. Do you know how to clean that trout?"

"No, sir."

"Good! Well, I'm going to help you out, as usual."

"Thank you, sir," said Simmins, and tried to hand Larry the fish.

"Not so," negatived that young man. "You're going to do it. Take him in your left hand, belly up—"

In five minutes Simmins possessed a cleaned rainbow trout, bloody, slimy hands, and a mind in which loathing and barbarian triumph were strangely mingled. His backbone was stiffer and he looked Davenport in the eye with what approached a comradely grin.

"A bit messy!" he commented; but without the "sir." After all, there is nothing that makes for a sense of equality more than joining in the occupations of the upper classes—like cleaning fish.

The evening meal was a jolly one, thanks to this trout. Grimstead's high good humour carried all temperamental differences before it. Even the taciturn Gardiner unbent to tell an anecdote. Burton was in the highest spirits, also, for she had what she considered a very intriguing secret, which she intended to keep for the time being at least, in the hope of extracting from the situation still further amusement. In this she was abetted by Larry Davenport himself. Now that that young man really understood the position in the social structure he was supposed to

fill, he played up and became the Perfect Garage Mechanic. When this performance drew Simmins' puzzled eye Larry's happiness was complete.

After everybody had eaten all the trout he could, and praised the same all he was able, the meal was at an end. Simmins and Gardiner had cooked some other things, but nobody wanted them.

"Don't you care, old scout," Larry comforted Simmins. "It is always that way with the first trout. Take a tip, and after this when the first trout of the season are brought in cook just tea and bread."

"Now," sighed Grimstead comfortably, as he struggled to his thick legs, "if you young people will excuse us, Ross and I have a little business to talk over. We'll wander down toward the creek."

He lighted a cigar and, followed by Gardiner, disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI

"NOW," he demanded of Gardiner, once they were settled on a convenient log. "How about it?"

His benign good humour had fallen from him, and his whole being had tautened into a hard alertness.

"It's been running without a break, and without apparent loss of energy at any time up to five o'clock, when I came in with Simmins to cook supper."

"Looks like a good thing, then?"

"It looks like better than that just on the showing it's already made."

"I'm almost beginning to believe that cock and bull story about his having come eleven hundred miles with it already."

"It's not impossible. It would be no more unprecedented than driving that starter all day."

"Well, we certainly played in luck hitting that stub. We've got to tie this thing down before somebody else gets hold of it. I wonder if anybody has? He might be tied up already."

"May be," agreed Gardiner, "but I don't

think so. This seems to be his first test of the thing."

"Well, we must tie him up," said Grimstead.

He fell silent for so long that Gardiner at length asked:

"Going to buy him out, chief? You could probably get it cheap, comparatively."

"No," replied the older man. "I've been considering that. In the first place, I don't believe he'd sell out. I've been sizing him up pretty carefully, and I'm pretty sure that a direct offer he'd want advice about, or want time to consider. And, Ross, once he gets out of these redwoods and consults somebody, it's all off. Any fool can see the possibilities. No, we've got to cinch this thing here and now."

"Yes, you're right on that," agreed Gardiner.

"But a share in the business is different—" went on Grimstead, "perhaps a royalty. I don't know: we'll see how he rises to it."

"You can probably make a good bargain," agreed Gardiner once more. "He apparently has no idea of the possible value of this thing."

Grimstead shrugged his shoulders a little impatiently.

"Gardiner," said he, "I sometimes wonder a little about you!"

"What do you mean?" asked Gardiner, startled at the tone.

"Your technical knowledge is beyond praise; but you've got the most awful blind spots."

"I'm sorry, chief, but what is it this time?" begged Gardiner, whose diplomacy was no small part of his success.

"I gather you think we could drive a cheap bargain with this young man?"

Gardiner considered his reply for a moment.

"Yes," he said finally, with conviction. "I think we could—before he gets talking with some one else."

"Of course we could, but we won't."

"Sir?"

"I say we won't. I'll offer him the very largest share I can, or the highest royalties possible consistent with control and good business. See why?"

Gardiner hesitated; then shook his head.

"Well, either this is a whopping big thing, or it is a flivver. If it's a flivver it doesn't matter if we give him the whole works: it would be giving him nothing. But suppose it turns out to be a world beater and we've made a sharp bargain. Either he, or some one else, is going to buck. Then there's law suits and infringements without end. If, however, we have at the very start, before the thing is proved up at all, given him a full share, then when it turns out big he'll stay with us. Get it?"

"Yes, sir, I do. You're right," said Gardiner. He saw the point quickly enough, once it was pointed out to him, for he was clever. This sort of thing was why Grimstead was the Chief and not the Second in Command.

They returned to the fireside, where Burton and Larry were teasing Rapscallion, while Punketty-Snivvles cast malicious animal magnetism at them.

"Well, young man," said Grimstead directly, "your battery seems to be making good. There's no doubt that you have a big thing there. I don't know just how big: that will have to be tested out pretty exhaustively. But even as a small battery it is big: and it may conceivably run into power."

"I believe it will," said Davenport. "As I told you, I believe it will either run tandem with as many others as we can hitch on, or maybe increase of size would do it."

"Maybe. That would be a matter of experiment. But it's good enough to market as it is. Ever thought of it?"

"Yes, of course. But I've never been sure enough it was going to work to do anything about it."

Grimstead cast an eye of triumph toward Gardiner.

"Well," said he, "I am considerably in the

electric line myself. What would you think of taking it up with me?"

"I was going to propose it myself, after you had satisfied yourself the thing was going to run."

"Good! Now I'm not going to insult your intelligence by trying to buy outright," said Grimstead, craftily gaining merit from his decision. "You'd know better than that. There are two other methods. By one you would get a certain amount of stock in the company. By the other you would be paid a definite royalty. In the first instance you would have a voice in management, and also responsibility. In the second instance you would be relieved from all trouble, but would have nothing to say."

"I see the difference," Davenport nodded. "But I don't believe I could decide as to my choice until I heard a more definite proposition of each kind. How much stock would I get, and how much royalty?"

Grimstead here showed further his qualification for chiefhood by shooting back his proposal. He had thought it all out, and was ready.

"In either case you should be a millionaire," he concluded.

"I don't know that being a millionaire particularly interests me," rejoined Davenport thoughtfully. "I've seen a lot of those birds in my time,

and their money seems to have done something to even the best of them that I'm not sure I'd like done to me."

"Well," suggested Grimstead jocularly, "there'd be no objection to cutting down your share, if that's the difficulty."

Davenport laughed.

"Oh, I'm no ass!" he replied. "If I don't want to be a millionaire I can probably arrange it for myself."

"Marry a girl who knows how," suggested Grimstead, grinning at Burton, who flushed angrily.

"I'm no ass!" repeated Davenport. "That's the sort of girl who insists that you keep on being a millionaire."

"No, you're no ass," agreed Grimstead unexpectedly, "and you're no garage man. I don't know who you are, but you can't bluff me."

Burton glanced at him amusedly.

"The royalty idea appeals to me," continued Davenport, paying no attention to the byplay, "for I certainly do not want to get mixed up in affairs unless I have to. But I *do* feel responsibility in turning a thing like this loose without at least trying to do my part."

"You'd find the business part of it in pretty competent hands," Grimstead assured him.

"I do not doubt that for a moment," said

Davenport earnestly. "I shouldn't have a moment's uneasiness on that score. I'm thinking of the world at large."

"World at large?" repeated Grimstead, a little blankly.

"Yes. You, of course, have not thought of this as much as I have, for it is a new proposition to you. But I've been pondering on it for a very long while. It's the terrific upset in industry that must come from this."

"Of course there will be readjustments," agreed Grimstead.

"But just stop to follow this out. Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that this battery is all it might be; that it is a genuine short cut to unlimited power. There would be no sense in mining another pound of coal, of cutting another stick of cordwood, of turning another dynamo, of making another steam or gas engine. Just in the field of the domestic, every man could have one or more down cellar by which he could light and heat his house, cook his food, and turn whatever appliances he might have to turn. The gas and electric companies would simply have to go out of business. Why should anybody buy anything of them? The hydroelectric companies would close. The oil companies would not close, but they'd be largely reduced and crippled. Those are the principal things. But reaching out

from that, think of the correlated industries that would be more or less affected—"

"I've got that kind of imagination, young man," interrupted Grimstead drily. "I'd already considered all that."

"Of course," smiled Davenport, relapsing from his tense eagerness. "And then besides the hundreds of millions of dollars of capital, there are hundreds of thousands of workmen who would be thrown out of employment for a time until the readjustment had been made."

"Why, it sounds terrible!" cried Burton.

"That's why I say there's a responsibility connected with it. All this capital and these works of various kinds and these workmen will find other and probably more ultimately useful things to do after a time. Everybody expected the breweries and wine grape vineyards to shut up shop when prohibition came in, but they managed to find something to make. But they should be given time. It shouldn't be sprung on them all at once."

"What would be your suggestion?" asked Grimstead, who was watching the flushed young man through narrowed lids.

Davenport laughed boyishly.

"My goodness! That's a large order! But I suppose it might be fed out through a single in-

dustry at first—say, motor boat engines, or something of that kind. If we held the patents, we could regulate that exactly."

"I see your point, Mr. Davenport, of course. Then you think that the stock proposition appeals to you most?"

"It doesn't appeal to me the most," disclaimed Davenport. "Far from it. But I guess it's what I ought to have."

"Very well," returned Gardiner decisively. "Gardiner, get your note book and take this."

Gardiner had risen from the post of private secretary and so took shorthand.

"Draw me up a proper contract embodying these points," Grimstead instructed him. "Patents in name of Universal Power Corporation. Capital stock one hundred thousand shares, no par value, non-assessable. Forty per cent to Mr. Davenport. Sixty to me. I to furnish all working capital. Manufacture to commence within three months. One hundred thousand dollars to be paid Mr. Davenport as bonus cash payment on the conclusion of the first one thousand bona fide sales. That satisfactory as far as it goes?"

The attentive youth nodded.

"All right. Now just to cover the point you brought up, add this: that for the first five years

Mr. Davenport is to have the veto right as to any contemplated extensions of business. That ought to suit you, Davenport."

"That's fine!" cried the young man, his brow clearing. "I was trying to figure how I would have anything to say with only forty per cent of the stock and yet I realise perfectly that the business control should be in the business hands."

"All right. Get your typewriter and put it in shape, Ross."

Gardiner disappeared with a flashlight in the direction of the car, to return after a few moments carrying a portable typewriter. Grimstead met him just at the circle of firelight.

"No shenanigan about this, Ross," he warned in a low voice. "I want this contract drawn absolutely fairly, so that any lawyer he may consult will approve of it. I don't want a chance for an objection once we leave this place."

"I understand that part of it, but—"

"He's one of those lily-whites," growled Grimstead. "I've got him located now. Full of uplift and shy of horse sense. I know 'em; and they've got to be handled. He's cuckoo on the service-to-humanity stuff."

"I don't quite get your giving him that veto right—"

"Too long: I'll tell you to-morrow."

"Do I get some of this stock?"

"I'll take care of you—and I'll use you! Don't you worry! Come fishing with me to-morrow and we'll talk it over. Oh, one more thing: the chances are that he won't sign any contract without seeing a lawyer, no matter how well satisfied he is with its provisions. He'll want to see if it's technically all right. So draw up a subsidiary agreement on his part to sign the contract provided his lawyer—get his name—pronounces it technically correct. We'll get him to sign that anyway; and that will tie him up."

It was near ten o'clock before the little typewriter ceased clicking; and about eleven when Davenport affixed his signature to the agreement to sign. As Grimstead had foreseen, he did not want to sign the contract itself without expert advice as to its form; but, being satisfied with its substance, he was willing to agree to that.

"Now," cried Grimstead, heaving himself erect with a joyous bellow, "we'll demonstrate what an unprincipled old law breaker you have hooked up with. Simmins, bring me my black bag." He produced a small key on the end of a gold chain and unlocked the black "bag," which was more like a deep and stiff suitcase. Simmins eyed the key sadly. He had never been able, try as he might, to duplicate it. The two sides of the box, on being opened wide on their hinges, disclosed a velvet-lined interior filled with appro-

priate notches and slots into which fitted six bottles. Other notches carried two nests of tumblers.

"Water, lemons, sugar!" commanded Grimstead.

He set out on the ground before him four of the tumblers and poured into each a generous measure from one of the bottles.

"Illegal to transport without a permit," he chuckled.

He reached up a hand for the ingredients and caught Simmins' eye, after which he fumbled again in the box and set out another tumbler. The psychic could then have heard beatific peace plunking into Simmins' soul.

The drinks mixed, Simmins handed one to each. Grimstead arose.

"Here's to the Universal Power Corporation!" he proposed.

"And to its inventor," supplemented Burton.

"And to its commercial genius," added the diplomatic Gardiner, looking toward his chief.

"And to its inspiration," concluded Larry boldly, lifting his glass to Burton.

They drank. Larry saw the toil-driven millions, and the lifting of yet another of the great Pressures of life. Burton saw confusedly an angel with a flaming sword somehow reopening by a crack the gates of Eden. Gardiner con-

templated a vision of great activity and great wealth. Grimstead was smiling. What he saw the great invisible Intelligences too were perceiving through the lenses of his soul. They did not smile.

CHAPTER XVII

THE next morning the corduroying across the meadow was finished and a new road around the fallen giant was begun.

"My light car could make it now," said Larry, "but we'd better make a road for yours."

"The people who come for it could do that," suggested Gardiner.

"Depends on how busy they are. I know them. It won't hurt us to put in our time."

To this Grimstead agreed. In his younger days he had been a good axeman, a fact which he had proved sufficiently to Davenport to enable him to coax the precious axe from that young man's custody. Now he enjoyed chopping at the light stuff and the soft-wood debris. At noon, however, they laid off for the day.

"If you're going fishing again," suggested Davenport, "and want to try the fly, you might go upstream. The water will be clearer up there. It's pretty rough and thick going if you try to follow the stream, but look here—"

He squatted woodsman fashion on his heels in front of Grimstead and proceeded to trace a map on the smooth earth.

"Just north of here she makes a bend, this

way, around the hill that lies just back of us. Now if you strike due east from here you'll run into an old wood road, about half a mile. Follow that to the remains of an old clearing atop the ridge. That's where we were yesterday," he turned to Burton. "Now if you angle to the north, and take the northerly swale out of a clump of willows, you'll come to the stream again and you can then fish it right to camp. Better make up your mind to wade. It's about a mile and a half over the hill, and it gives you somewhere near five miles of fishing water."

"Big ones?" enquired Grimstead.

"Nothing like you caught yesterday. But nice ones."

Grimstead considered.

"Upstream it is," he decided. "But to-morrow, I warn you, I'm going downstream again and catch a whale."

"There's one thing: be sure you get the most northerly swale. The country star-fishes up there, and if you get to following the wrong cañon you'll end lost."

"You better come along, Ross," said Grimstead. "Go get your tackle."

Gardiner disappeared in the direction of the car, and was gone so long that Grimstead became fidgetty. Gardiner seemed to have a great deal of tackle to rig and clothes to put on.

"Here," said Grimstead at last, "I'm going to make a start. You follow along when you get ready. I'll strike the stream and fish down, and you keep going until you find me."

"I won't be a second," protested Gardiner.

"That's all right," growled Grimstead, "then you won't have so far to catch up."

He tramped off sturdily, and was almost at once struck small by the gigantic forest. Ten minutes later, after vexatious delays having to do with leaders and the disentangling thereof, Gardiner followed. Simmins approached.

"There would seem to be no occasion for my further presence, sir?" he suggested, indicating with a turn of the head the direction of the patiently labouring self-starter.

"We seem to be safe for the present," agreed Davenport. "Why? What's on your mind?"

"I thought I would like to try my luck, sir."

"Sure. Go to it! Better go downstream, though. Know anything about fishing?"

Simmins hesitated. Three days ago he would have replied to the effect that he had invented fishing.

"Very little, sir," he confessed. Simmins was coming on.

Davenport arose.

"Well, you for the willow pole and split shot combination," said he.

In five minutes Simmins departed bearing the aforementioned willow pole rigged with a short line, split shot sinker, and the hook of a number six fly from which the feathers had been stripped. In his side coat pocket were two tin cans, one of which contained worms and the other white grubs.

"Now," admonished Davenport, "when you find a pool, or a smooth behind a rock or log, sneak up on it very gently, and just drop your bait in the middle of it. When you get a bite, *heave!* Don't try to play your fish. Yank him out before he can yank himself loose."

"Yes, sir," replied Simmins blissfully. Already he had a complete drama in cold storage, conversations and all, having to do with his return at eventide carrying a long string of shining beauties to find that Grimstead and Gardiner, for all their fancy tackle, had succeeded in landing only four, and they rather small. Simmins was at first inclined to bring them in with empty creels, but reconsidered. He felt this was rather handsome of him, and experienced a glow of generosity. As a matter of fact, his subconscious, artistic sense taught him it would be more effective if they had four small ones. Later he added a telling touch. Gardiner met him just out of sight of camp and tried to buy all or part of his string from him.

"Simmins," he implored, his haughty, purse-proud manner dropping from him in his earnestness, "to one of your known piscatorial reputation this is a small matter, but to me it is everything. How can I appear before Miss Burton empty handed? To win her bright regard it is necessary that I come to her bearing the fruits of success."

Simmins cast upon him a glance in which pity and lofty contempt were admirably blended.

"I am sorry, Mr. Gardiner," he replied, "but some things there are that gold cannot buy. My honour is dear to me. I cannot be party to deception no matter what the guerdon. Out of consideration for your station I will say nothing of this episode; but do not so approach me again."

Then came the entrance with the string of fish. Curtain as before.

Simmins stored away his paraphernalia and took his departure. Rapscallion rose to his forelegs and looked after him, ears pricked. The ordinary fishing excursion left Rapscallion rather worse than cold. There was no interest in such excursions; and some danger. You walked a few steps at a time, and lay down, and yawned, and slept, and waited some more while your master puttered and puttered and puttered in one spot busy on his silly affairs. If you approached

near enough to experience a sense of companionship, you were ordered sternly to a distance. Occasionally a curious and violent agitation took place in the water, which evidently had merit as an exciting agency. At least you got vibrations from master to that effect. Row, turmoil, dashing about! It would seem a meet and sufficient opportunity for a little contributory barking, with alarums and short excursions in the direction of the combat: not with any idea of grabbing the thing, mind you, but by way of intelligent interest. You'd think so, wouldn't you? Not at all! Try it. You'll get pebbles heaved at you, and be ordered harshly. And when you are allowed—or encouraged—to approach and examine the quarry after it is subdued, what do you find? A slippery, cold and smelly *fish!* Not for Rapscallion! He much preferred to stay in camp.

But as he gazed after Simmins something atavistic stirred in his brain. Some of Rapscallion's ancestors must have had happier experiences at this type of field sport. The pictures were not in Rapscallion's memory, but the inherited impressions were in his consciousness; impressions dimly felt of ragged small boys with willow poles like this—and happy leaping barkings before, behind, all around as a clover field was crossed —and snuggling bright-eyed and eager next a

small thinly clad form—and a dark pool below—: and then suddenly a wild yank, a spray of water, a silvery form sailing through the air in a wide arc overhead, and a wild dash of boy and dog to fall with shouts on the leaping thing in the grass—fun! Rapscallion's eyes lighted. He licked his chops. Then, with Punketty-Snivvles slavishly at heel, he followed Simmins.

Burton, coming from her tent a few minutes later, found Larry smoking his pipe alone.

"Deserted. Everybody. Even the dogs," he answered her enquiry. "Like to go walking? Different kind?"

"Surely!" she cried eagerly.

This time they headed straight up the stream, keeping just outside the edge of the willow thicket. The walking was not so good as in the higher forest, but there were more flowers, birds and sunshine. The creek shouted or muttered behind the screen, or occasionally flashed at them through an opening. After a quarter mile the willows pinched out and the trees drew closer.

"Not much farther," promised Larry. "This is pretty rough going."

"I thought you said this was to be a *walk!*" she scorned.

"Not at all," he rejoined, unmoved. "I said we'd go walking, not take a walk. Vast difference."

"That's a quibble. But then we're going somewhere definite?"

"Very definite."

But he refused to be more explicit. After another half mile the hill, which had been lying to their right, swung around as though to cross their path. Here, evidently, the stream made the bend back Larry had described to Grimstead, though as they approached Burton could not for the life of her see where it could break through what seemed to be a continuous rampart. Indeed only at fairly touching distance did it become evident that two ranges in echelon made between themselves a narrow gorge. Here at the entrance stood detached a fragment of rock, big as a summer cottage, square as a cube of sugar. Its perpendicular sides were grown with ferns, maidenhair, miner's lettuce and a half hundred other tiny plants and mosses. To the rear of this Larry led the way. Here it lost its apparent inaccessibility. A jagged heap of talus and debris gave a rather rough passage to the top.

"Pretty scrambly," said he. "Think you can make it?"

She scorned reply, but began at once to scramble up over the rough and jagged talus. Davenport watched the poise of her light and graceful figure for a moment, then followed.

The top of the rock was perfectly flat, but at two elevations, one two feet higher than the other. It was carpeted deep with moss.

"Hop down," advised Larry, himself descending to the lower of the two elevations. "Now sit down and lean your back. Can you beat this?"

The natural seat thus formed and cushioned commanded to the right a view up the stream which at this point ran straight and wide for some distance. Directly ahead was the slope of the ridge, elusively sensed through the screen of underbrush which here the slant of the ground caused to rise. To the left the view was open, above the brush, and down through the spaced and tremendous distances between the redwood trunks. A cool air breathed down the stream, diluting the spiced, aromatic sun-warmth of the forest. Sunlight played unweariedly dancing. Birds flitted and midges hovered in the sun.

"I want to know more about this gift of yours," demanded Burton after a time. "You said, didn't you, that you thought everybody ought to have it?"

"Yes, I do believe it belongs normally in the race."

"Could I do it—with practice?"

"I'm certain of it."

"Why?"

"Well, you're young, and you haven't been much spoiled yet by your kind of life."

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded, a little hotly.

"Very rotten influence, your kind of a life, after a certain age, on the average," said Davenport without heed to her tone. "Doesn't do much harm while you're in the A B C's of life, except that it's likely to be bad preparation for the D E F's. But no immediate harm."

"Thank you," she said drily. "I'm young and unspoiled—probably good-hearted! Anything else? That hardly seems like adequate reason."

He turned to her with his disarmingly boyish smile.

"No. You're right. That isn't much of a reason, except after the fact. The truth is I know you can do this the same way I knew the tree was going to fall or what the ants were going to do."

"Oh!" she cried, her resentment lost in eagerness. "I want to try! How do you start?"

He smiled.

"This is no conjuring trick to be learned: it's a good healthy faculty to be developed. You've got to relax utterly; and then, when you're all relaxed so not a muscle is tensed anywhere in your body, you've got to relax something inside

of you that you hold tight together for every-day life—something in your consciousness. Then things just float in and you leave them alone for future reference. If you start to think of them or examine them or appraise them at the time, then your inner relaxation is spoiled and you don't get anything more. Is that sufficiently vague for you?"

"I get a kind of idea," she said slowly.

"You've got to grope until you feel it once," he warned.

"I'm going to begin now," she announced.

He leaned back in a comfortable position to watch her. She had laid aside her hat, and the cool air current was stirring the hair at her temples. Little by little her form fell into the simple, restful curves of relaxation; one by one even the smaller muscles relinquished their guard. Her face took on the dreamy and far-away peacefulness of a sleeping child's. Then her eyes became remote, and she sat there in the altar rock in the ancient forest gazing into infinities. Davenport watched her at first keenly, then with satisfaction, and then, as his eyes continued to rest on her wistful and childlike countenance a great tenderness and longing crept from beneath his customary repression and looked forth at her unashamed.

Thus fifteen minutes passed. Then she stirred

slightly, and the ordinary animation of life flowed slowly back into her attitude and expression.

"Well?" asked Davenport at last.

"It was certainly very curious," she confessed. "I can't make it out."

"What seemed to happen?" he urged.

"Why, nothing. That's the curious part. I didn't go to sleep or anything. I saw the forest all the time, and I felt you next me, but—"

"Yes?" he encouraged.

"This is silly." She shook herself. "Now let's see: I didn't seem to be all there. One part of me wasn't there; the everyday part."

"That's what I mean by setting your work-a-day mind aside," he explained.

"Yes, I gather that. But somehow the atmosphere seemed different—I mean the air that is all around and through me. Oh, dear! I don't know what I mean!"

"What about the air?"

"I don't know, but somehow it seemed *alive.* It was like the difference between still water and boiling water."

"You've got it," he cried, "or at least a start at it. I think it's wonderful to get all that the first trial! It ought to take years!"

"It scared me a little," she confessed. "I didn't know it was going to be so—so *active.* I

thought you'd just go blank in the mind and thoughts would drift in."

"Why shouldn't it be active?" he pointed out. "The whole universe is active."

"It scared me a little just the same," she repeated. "Are you sure I won't go in a trance or something if I do that?"

"Well, I'm a pretty healthy specimen," said Larry. "My own belief is that it's as normal a process as when you focus your mind to add up your accounts."

He hesitated, and the sunburn on his cheeks seemed to deepen a little.

"Did—did you get any—well, thoughts?" he enquired.

She looked straight ahead, and her colour too deepened.

"Nothing—nothing particular," she replied steadily enough. "I really couldn't expect much of anything the first trial, could I?"

"Are we going to waste time?" he asked gently.

She did not reply. After waiting a moment he reached out and took her hand. She half withdrew it; then abandoned it to him.

"You did see," he insisted. "You saw what I saw yesterday when we were in the old orchard, what I have felt from the very first instant I saw you standing in the firelight, beautiful as the night."

She struggled painfully.

"I don't know what to tell you!" she cried in desperation at last. "Somehow I cannot help but be honest."

"It would be no use otherwise; I know," he told her. "I'll tell you what I saw. Part of it I knew already; that I loved you, that the very air you breathed was by that made radiant to me, that where you stood was light and all other places darkness. But I saw also that we were mates. Those things run deeper than our fancies, deeper than even the infatuation that may last through a whole lifetime. I saw that, and I know it is eternally true."

She turned on him troubled eyes.

"I don't know why I talk and act this way. It seems almost shameless. I do not understand it. But somehow I cannot hide and dodge and retreat and flirt as I— It is impossible. I do not know what it is that has come to me, Larry, and you must wait until I find out. I have been made love to before and— From the first I have been attracted to you. Just now when I tried to set my mind aside, as you call it, just one idea, one impression, came to me, and that was of nearness to you—I don't mean physical nearness—I don't know what I mean or what I'm talking about—"

"I do," he assured her.

"I am shaken, and I don't know; I can't tell what it means."

"It is the answer to my love for you!" he breathed.

She turned her clear eyes on him again.

"I do not know," she repeated, "and I must know. I might allow you to keep my hand and to—and to go on, and there is something leaping within me that tells me I would be swept away by your love. But I must not; and you must not. If it were not so serious to me, that might happen. I am talking in what my mother would have called a most unmaidenly manner," she ended with a wistful little smile.

He gently restored her hand to her lap.

"I understand," said he. "But it will come. I am on air! It can no more help coming than the poppy can help unfolding in the sun."

"I hope not," she breathed, but so low that he did not catch the syllables.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT this moment, just when some obvious change of subject seemed most desirable, Grimstead appeared wading down the middle of the stream.

"Keep quiet!" Burton adjured Larry. "Let's surprise him!"

The fisherman was having a fine time, splashing down the long, straight vista, casting his fly right, left and straight ahead as he advanced. Larry watched him critically for a few moments.

"He knows the job," he told Burton. "Did you see him make that flip cast to the pool behind the cedar root?"

The pool behind the cedar root yielded a rise that immediately developed into an indignant rainbow struggling to involve himself in underwater roots. For a time Grimstead managed to foil this intention, but a sharp and unexpected dash trailed the dropper fly across a part of the snag, where it became firmly embedded. After that Mr. Rainbow proceeded to pull himself loose and depart. Grimstead, rather red in the face, tried to disengage the drooper hook without getting near the pool, flipping the line, pull-

ing it down stream, poking the tip past it—all the angler's tricks known—but in vain. At last he had to wade out to the snag, roll up his sleeve, and plunge his arm in nearly to the shoulder before once more his leader swung clear. The pool, and it was a promising one, was of course completely ruined.

"You'd be surprised at Dad's language," chuckled Burton.

"He hasn't said a word," expostulated Larry. "He's a good old sport."

"Just the same there's language. I know Dad," whispered Burton. "He just hasn't used it yet, that's all. This is not a propitious moment to spring any surprises. In a minute he'll pull out a cigar and bite it in two. I know the symptoms. There! What did I tell you! Now when he's got that about half smoked he'll be human again. Hush! Keep quiet!"

Grimstead, after lighting the mangled fragment of the cigar, had waded ashore opposite the flat rock atop which the two were perched. There he sat, concealed from view. Only the curling smoke and the aroma of the excellent tobacco betrayed his presence.

Davenport felt his arm seized tightly. Burton, her eyes dancing with fun, was pointing an ecstatic forefinger up stream. In the vista Gardiner had appeared and was making his way

as fast as a reluctance to get in over his top boots would let him.

"Just in time!" breathed Burton. "Now we'll get the language!"

Grimstead also caught sight of the approaching figure, and his roaring voice exploded so violently from beneath the rock that the young people above him clutched each other delightedly.

"Where the blue hell you been!" was the opening. Burton, though a young and innocent maiden, had been brought up with the Pirate Chief and had acquired moral immunity from the said Chief's vocabulary; but you, gentle reader, have not, and therefore I will judiciously omit. The argument was that the Chief had waited too long for his Second in Command to catch up with him, as per original agreement, and wanted to know why. Gardiner did not appear to be disturbed. He hopped from rock to rock until he too had gained the space beneath the great boulder, and then, and then only, made reply.

"I got into one of those starfish cañons that young fool told us about, and it took me some time to find it out and to get back," he explained calmly.

"Fine woodsman you are!" scorned Grimstead. "Couldn't you see my plain trail?"

"I don't pretend to be a woodsman," dis-

claimed Gardiner, "and I did pretty well to get here at all. I see you've got some nice ones," he went on, having evidently with great tact looked into the creel before introducing the topic of fish.

"Not bad," growled Grimstead; "just lost a beauty at that pool up there." His thunderstorm was evidently receding down over the horizon.

Burton now considered the time right for her surprise, and she began to make moss balls to toss over onto them. The next words, however, arrested her.

"Now I've caught up, chief," Gardiner was saying, "for heaven's sake tell me why you gave this fellow the right to limit sales for five years. You heard him talk. You'll be making them for row boats only, if you don't watch out."

"Suits me," returned Grimstead calmly.

"I don't believe I get your idea."

"Well, you asked me if I heard him talk. Yes, I heard him talk, and I've heard that kind of talk all my life. It always comes from a half-baked, impractical *chump* who is so full of impossible ideals that he never gets anywhere, and who couldn't see the main point if you wrapped it in his breakfast napkin. You got to handle that kind, and handle 'em right, or you'll never get an inch."

"That's true enough," commented Gardiner.

It is probable that Davenport would have broken in at this point in some spectacular fashion had not Burton held his arm and placed her fingers over his lips.

"All he sees is that these batteries of his will replace the world's power and that a lot of high falutin' things will happen for the benefit of the human race and all that visionary rot that's never worked out yet and never will."

"What do we care what he thinks as long as we can sell the batteries?" queried Gardiner. "It's going to take quite some few batteries of any size you name to replace the world's power, and that is the eventual market, if the thing works."

"We're assuming that it works," growled the older man, "otherwise there's nothing doing."

"Then why limit the sale to what this nut thinks proper?"

"You're nearly as bad as he is, Ross," observed Grimstead, a note of good humour creeping into his voice. "I'll give you a demonstration that will impress it on you."

"Shoot!" urged Gardiner.

"You asked me last night how many shares in this thing you get. Well, you don't get any."

A blank silence of some seconds ensued.

"I don't believe I understand," then said Gardiner in rather a strangled voice.

"Me and this young man will hold all the stock," emphasised Grimstead.

"Then where do I come in!" demanded Gardiner with a note of rising indignation.

Grimstead chuckled.

"You wouldn't come in one cent's worth if we should do as you seemed to think we would, begin to manufacture and market these things promiscuously."

Gardiner apparently had regained his equanimity.

"Well, chief, I don't get you yet; but I've been on the job long enough to know you have some notion of taking care of me."

"I told you that; and that I am going to use you."

"I think we ought to let them know we are here," whispered Davenport uneasily.

But the girl's eyes were blazing.

"I don't like this," she whispered back. "It's your business they're discussing—and mine!"

Davenport's heart leaped at the last words, but she was leaning forward again, eavesdropping with all her might.

"If I can get one good working model I don't care whether another of the things is made for ten years, let alone five," stated Grimstead. "My Lord, man! Think of the shake down! This is going to put every hydroelectric com-

pany, every public utility outfit out of business! Not to speak of all the oil and coal and such things. The securities of those companies won't be worth a red cent. The market, man! Think of the market! There are a hundred dollars to be had there for every dollar out of the mere sale of those things! Why, you and I will have the world by the tail!"

"You're right," Gardiner replied slowly, "with capital—"

"Which I supply. I'll smash Corbusier first of all, blast his hide; and I'll twist the necks of that Northwest Electric bunch; and I'll have them in packs begging at my office door. They'll see the point, don't worry; and those of them who don't will go to the poorhouse. They'll be crying to get aboard; and you and I will sit there and decide the terms. We can buy their stocks and bonds for a song."

"And resell at the market," caught up Gardiner, "but that means secrecy as to this battery."

"That's one place where you come in. You ought to be able to handle the publicity."

"I can if there aren't too many of the confounded things attracting attention—"

"I'll see to that. There won't be any of them. The contract says manufacture must start in six months; it doesn't say anything about marketing."

"There are bound to be leaks."

"A thousand of them. But who would pay any attention to the mere rumours of another perpetual motion machine? That part's your job."

A short pause ensued while the two men evidently envisaged the opportunity.

"Why, chief!" cried Gardiner at length, his voice vibrant with excitement. "It's tremendous! It's half the money in the world! It's all the power! You will rule the globe!"

"Just about that. Give me five years and I'll be the richest man in the world; that much is certain. But what is more I'll have the old crowd down and out or taking my orders. There'll be the biggest smash in history, and you and I, Ross, my boy, will push the button and take our pick of the prices. Then when we've got the whole situation in our hands we can decide just how far we'll go with this battery proposition. One thing certain: we'll be in a position to do just as much or just as little with it as we choose." Grimstead chuckled. "But I'm certainly going to make a good start by busting Corbusier so high he never will come down!"

"This man Davenport, isn't he likely to upset the apple cart?" enquired Gardiner.

"That's part of *my* job," answered Grimstead. "I'll guarantee to handle that young man."

There were sounds of his rising. "So you better string with me, Ross, and take orders, and not ask too many questions."

"I intend to!" cried Gardiner fervently.

They moved off down stream, and were almost immediately lost to sight around the lower bend.

CHAPTER XIX

BURTON was aflame with indignation, and was bursting out with comments suitable to the occasion; but Davenport silenced her with a gesture.

"Please," he begged, "let me think."

He was very grave.

"This is rather terrible," he said at length.

"It is atrocious!" she cried. "It is treacherous! That they should treat you so!"

"Me? Oh, I don't matter. But his ideas are all destructive. He sees a chance to tear down and to build up his own personal power from the debris. That had not even occurred to me! I saw only the releasing of pressure—"

"To think that my father—"

"Yes, there is that; I had forgotten that for a moment. It is very difficult. I am afraid I have made a mistake. I see that now. It was foolish of me to have jumped into an alliance without giving more thought to it, without considering— But it seemed to fall so pat, our all being here together, and Mr. Grimstead one of the biggest men in just that line— It was an impulse, and I followed it."

"Why shouldn't you!" she cried. "Who wouldn't? Who would have *believed* that any one would do such a thing?"

"Well, it's done. The question is, what to do next?"

"Fight, of course!" she answered promptly. "I should think you'd be just *boiling!*"

"I'm sad, and a little frightened," he confessed. "It is like holding a typhoon in my hand."

"You aren't going to lie down and let them do this!"

"No; that must not be."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I don't know."

He arose without further words, offered her his hand, and the two descended the talus and took their way in silence back to the camp. Grimstead roared at them jovially as soon as they came in sight.

"Come and look at 'em!" he shouted.

Davenport did not answer. He covered the distance between them and stood gravely unsmiling before the older man.

"Mr. Grimstead," said he, "I have come to tell you that I overheard your conversation with Mr. Gardiner at the bend of the stream."

Grimstead's face flushed darkly, and the good humour vanished from it.

"Well?" he challenged.

"I cannot be party to the programme I heard outlined."

Grimstead considered a moment.

"Sit down," he invited. "Have a cigar. There's plenty of time to talk this thing out, so there's no excuse to go off half cock."

Davenport declined the cigar, but sat on the log.

"Now what's the trouble?" demanded Grimstead.

"The trouble is your programme is destructive," stated Davenport succinctly, "and aims merely at personal power without a thought to the welfare of other people. The thing is likely to prove a curse rather than a benefit. I think you are intelligent enough to understand my point without going into it further."

"I understand your point all right. And I understand your sort too well to argue with you. Argument's the long suit of your kind. So I'm just telling you. It's too bad you don't like my programme, but I play the cards I hold and that is final."

"In those circumstances I shall refuse to enter into this deal."

"In those circumstances it doesn't matter a damn whether you do or not. You've already entered into it."

"I shall refuse to sign the contract."

"You've already agreed to sign it," Grimstead pointed out, "and if you don't sign it, a court decree will put it into effect anyhow."

He eyed Davenport shrewdly. The young man seemed more troubled than angry.

"You are thinking that you may be able in some way to refuse to divulge your process," he continued. "Eh? I thought so. No go. You'll either have to produce it or be buried for life. The thing exists; I can prove it. You have contracted to deliver it. If you don't do it I shall enter suit first and collect every cent you may have by way of damages. Then I'll get a court order and if you don't pony up you'll go to jail for contempt. And I'll keep it up. I have a long arm, young man!"

Davenport's face flushed as this direct threat kindled him to defiance. Before he could speak Grimstead interposed.

"You're about to tell me to go to hell," said he with a short laugh. "You're mad enough at this moment to chuck the whole thing. That's because you're young. But you'll get over it when you think about it. It wouldn't do you any good. Your battery would be buried along with you. Nobody but me would be allowed to touch it. It, as well as you, would be lost to the world."

Grimstead paused a moment to allow this to

sink in. Then he went on in a more reassuring tone.

"You're not a business man, Mr. Davenport, and you don't realise that the business world is a fight from start to finish. It will be to the interests of every one affected to suppress this battery; in fact it will be a matter of life and death to them. And believe me, they'll fight to do so! I don't believe you quite appreciate what it means to have nearly the whole business world solidly against you, nor what a tremendous power they wield to crush you. It is a case of fight back harder than they fight, and to get the jump on them first."

He went on developing his point, showing that only by this early and unexpected raid into the enemy's camp could the ultimate success of the project be assured. Then he went on to point the moral by drawing a contrasting picture —Davenport in jail, discredited, broke, and above all inefficient; Davenport possessed of practically untold wealth, with the opportunities, if he so wished, of repairing damage inevitable to the readjustment. It was a pretty good plea, for a specious one. Grimstead himself was admiringly impressed by it, and reconvinced of the entire justice and expediency of his course; Gardiner too even arrived at a gentle glow of indignation that any one should even for a mo-

ment stand in the way of so obvious a procedure. Davenport, however, did not seem impressed. He stared at Grimstead with level gaze until the Pirate Chief had finished; then he arose from his log, remarked curtly that the situation was perfectly clear, and strode away in the direction of the creek crossing. Burton, after a moment, followed him.

Grimstead laughed and relighted his cigar.

"That was a good talk, chief," observed Gardiner, "and the whole thing is perfectly obvious. Even a blind man could see that."

"Well, don't fool yourself," replied the older man, "it was breath wasted as far as he is concerned. He's gone off mad, and don't you fool yourself on that."

"What can he do about it?"

"Nothing. But he'll try. I know that age and kind. And I don't doubt he'll find lawyers enough to help him. But I know my business and I have my wires to pull. Don't you fret!"

Burton overtook Davenport at the stream's edge. She saw at once that he was furiously angry, so angry that he could not permit himself to utter a word. She took his hand. He made a half effort as though to snatch it away, but she resisted it firmly. For several minutes they stood thus. Gradually the steady rush of the waters loosened the tension. The rigidity

of his attitude relaxed slightly, and he sighed deeply. Then Burton at last spoke.

"Larry," she said, drawing closer to him, "I just want you to know that what you said was true. We belong to each other. I know it now. I don't care what happens, that much they can never take from us."

He seized her hungrily, and they clung together for several moments while the calming, soothing influences swept through them. At length he released her with an explosive sigh. They had not kissed.

"Well, that is over!" he said. "Burton, oh, blessed one, I am so thankful you were here! If it had not been for you I should simply have killed them both as they sat there. But I just kept thinking that he was your father—"

"I know," she soothed him. "I know it was hard."

"I've never taken such talk from a man in my life! I've never been dictated to in any such manner! I've never had my rights so coolly trampled on! I've never listened to such cold-blooded cynicism!"

"I know; I know," she repeated. "I feel with you in every bit of it, whether he is my father or not. But let's not talk about it or we shall just be crazy angry again, and that will do us no good."

He took her by the shoulders.

"Where do you get your wisdom, Burton?" he asked her.

"Me, a useless, frivolous little social butterfly," she mocked. "Is that it?"

He smiled, and at the smile she clapped her hands.

"That's better!" she cried. "Now we can talk about it. What are we to do?"

"There's one thing I'm not going to do," he stated with conviction, "no matter what the price to pay; I'm not going to permit this scheme of destruction!"

"How can it be stopped?" she asked. "Let's be practical."

"For one thing, I can refuse to give them my formulæ."

"And lose all you own and go to jail besides, as father told you," she pointed out.

"Well, I'll do that, if necessary."

"Of course you would, and I'd go with you—if necessary. But isn't there some other way?"

"Kill 'em off and drop 'em down a barranca, I guess," replied Larry gloomily. "Then make a new start. Dead men tell no tales." His eye fired again. "And, by God," he swore, "if it weren't for the fact that you happen to be mixed in the situation that's exactly what I'd do, in a holy minute! I'd just as soon shoot that pair

as I would a pair of mad dogs! They're more of a menace to the world as things stand now."

"Well, I'm glad I'm here," she answered practically, "but I'm far from discouraging a certain amount of violence, if it proves necessary. Listen, Larry, dear. You're so boiling you're not using your head. Wouldn't destroying that agreement you signed be just as good as murdering somebody?"

He turned to her with the first appearance of his boyish grin.

"Burton, you blessed damosel," he cried, "you've got more sense in your little finger than I have in my whole body! Of course that's the answer! I'll just go and take it away from them." He laughed aloud. "Regular old melodrama stuff. Why, here's even The Papers!"

He turned as if to put this new idea into immediate execution; but again she stopped him.

"Larry, you poor infant!" she cried. "Do you always act this way? It's *time* you had somebody to look after you! What do you think you're going to do?"

"Get the agreement."

"How?"

"Well," said Davenport, his jaws shutting grimly, "I think they'll hand it over all right!"

She made a little gesture of comic despair.

"My 'ero!" she burlesqued, clasping her hands.

"Well, what's the matter?" enquired Larry a trifle sulkily. "You can't pull this melodrama stuff without *doing* something! And don't you worry about their handing over when I tell them to!"

"I don't," she replied. "I have no doubt you'll scare them into fits—though Dad doesn't scare very easily. Anyway, I have every confidence you'll get the agreement. Then what?"

"Why, then we have it!"

"Yes; and they can swear that it existed, and that it was taken from them by force."

"Well, what would you do then?"

"I'd steal it."

"Steal it!"

"Yes. Snatch it unbeknownst-like, you know!" she explained, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "Then what proof have they, except each other's words! You could deny that. Would you lie nicely in a good cause, do you think?" she mocked him.

"I don't know; it wouldn't be necessary. I think the burden of proof would be on them. You're right, though. Your head is worth two of mine. How will we do it?"

"Dissemble," she cried, vibrant with the eagerness of the adventure. "Fool them to the limit! Maybe I *wouldn't* want you to lie, but I'd just as soon you'd dissemble. We want them to think

that your opposition has blown over; that you're all ready to go ahead with the scheme. Then father won't hang onto his bill fold too closely and—"

"How do you know it's in the bill fold?"

"I saw him put it there," she explained impatiently.

"And he carries it in his coat pocket," Larry pointed out, "and his coat on his back! He's either got to be held up, or else one of us has got to turn pickpocket. I'm not skilful enough for that."

"We'll get hold of it, unless he gets suspicious," she brushed this aside impatiently. "That's why I say we must dissemble."

"Dissemblons!" cried Larry. "But how? I do not, I confess, admire the methods and outlook of your parent, but I will hand it to him on common sense. Such a sudden about face on my part may not appeal to it."

"I've thought of that," she said. A slow colour was mounting to her cheeks. "First of all it must become known who you are."

"Who I am?" echoed Larry, bewildered by this apparent change of subject.

"He thinks you are a garage man, remember."

"I forgot that," laughed Davenport. "All right; I drop the disguise and appear in me

full royal regalia as the Celebrated Author. Do you imagine that will impress him?"

"Then"—she hesitated—"then we give him the plausible reason for your changing your mind."

"Which is?"

"The announcement of our engagement," she said in a voice so low that he barely heard it.

At this most unpropitious moment there came around the bend (a) Rapscallion raffish and prancing, (b) Punketty-Snivvles, footsore, full of burrs, but faithful, (c) Simmins, lugging two drying and infinitesimal trout at the end of a forked willow switch.

"Damn!" muttered Davenport fervently.

Simmins and his circus approached, fatuously pleased with itself, and quite oblivious to Davenport's glowering.

"A rare afternoon of sport, I calls it, sir," he chirped. "Not what one would call a large catch, but distinctly sporting in the taking."

As may be seen, Simmins' original drama had undergone some modification before production; but that, I understand, is usual. The plot was now less crudely obvious. It had to do with quality *versus* quantity; with skill *versus* bull luck; with æsthetic satisfaction *versus* brutal slaughter. But Davenport cut in.

"Look here, Simmins," said he. "Do you want to do me a favour?"

Simmins' sensitive, artistic nature sensed importance here.

"Yes, sir, indeed, yes, sir," he answered, meaning, "to the death, oh, comrade of my soul!"

Burton touched Larry's sleeve.

"Do you think it wise?" she murmured.

"Absolutely!" he replied with conviction.

"I am going to entrust you with a secret, Simmins," went on Davenport with all the impressiveness he could muster, "in fact, two secrets."

"Yes, sir!" cried Simmins a little breathlessly.

"Simmins," confided Davenport, dropping his voice and, looking right and left, "I am not what I seem."

Simmins drew nearer.

"No, sir!" said he.

"No. You have taken me for a humble garage mechanic, one who toils amid wheels and wires and grease; one who sits in grimy overalls on the light upholstery of limousines; a common roughneck. You have been mistaken."

Larry glanced sideways and caught the round-eyed, eager expression of Simmins' face. He turned aside as though to hide his emotion.

"You tell him," he asked Burton in a choking voice. "It is more seemly that he hear the truth from other lips than mine."

Burton cast a look of contempt for Larry's weakness.

"This is Mr. Lawrence Davenport, the author, Simmins," she stated drily.

Simmins' face lighted in triumph.

"I knew as how you were a sportsman, sir; you remember my telling you. My instincts, sir, are very keen, sir, though often my brain is a bit puzzled."

"That, Simmins," said Davenport gravely, having mastered his emotion enough to turn a straight face, "is exactly what I was telling Miss Burton no later than yesterday."

"Yes, sir. I knew from the first somehow that you were a gentleman, sir; but there were many little things, if you will pardon my saying so, sir, that puzzled me. But a literary gentleman! That explains them."

"I am very dense, Simmins," said Davenport courteously. "Would you mind a further elucidation?"

This request seemed to embarrass Simmins. He floundered; but the delighted Larry was able at last to elicit something to the effect that literary people were always notably eccentric.

"Exactly. I shall bring up that point later," Davenport became serious. "The other secret, Simmins, is one that is purely personal, and I should certainly not confide it to you did I not feel that you are a friend of my own and a devoted servant to Miss Burton, and that you will

without hesitation assist us in what is a real crisis. The secret is that Miss Burton has promised to marry me."

"Oh, sir, thank you, sir!" cried Simmins, overwhelmed. "I esteem this an honour, sir; and I congratulate you."

"Unfortunately," went on Davenport, "as often happens in the business world, certain interests of Mr. Grimstead's clash with my interests. Unfortunately, again, it is a question of my complete ruin; but only a matter of minor importance to Mr. Grimstead. The whole affair depends on a certain paper which Mr. Grimstead carries in his bill book. The paper belongs to me, and it is vitally necessary I get it back. Will you help?"

"It will affect all our future happiness," put in Burton.

"It is only fair to say that if you are caught, I should of course do my best, but it is probable I could help very little. If you succeed my wife and I"—Davenport glanced triumphantly toward Burton—"will take care of you."

"It's a sporting chance, sir," said Simmins stoutly. "You have treated me like a gentleman and humble though the heart of Charles Simmins may be, it can never be said that it beats in an ungrateful bosom!"

The internal Simmins at once began a wild

can-can of triumph. The above speech was delivered, as written, in the open air. At last one of Simmins' private dramas had been produced!

"The sentiment does you credit," Davenport was replying. "I turned to you because I believed I could rely on you. The affair is simple. We want you to steal that paper. In your service you can quite naturally make an occasion in handling the garments. But be cautious. It will have to be done very naturally indeed. The slightest suspicion and all is lost!"

Simmins swelled visibly. Davenport was playing up in wonderful style. To be sure Simmins could have rewritten the above speech to more telling effect, but the sentiment was perfect and the rendition not bad. That last sentence was good! "The slightest suspicion and all is lost!" The internal Simmins gave that quite a hand.

"Have no fear," he assured them grandly, "ere moonrise The Papers shall be in our power!"

This time Burton choked and turned away, and Larry cast upon her the reproachful eye.

"Now, Simmins, listen," he impressed the point. "There are two papers, and they both begin about as follows." He recited the opening sentences of an agreement. "You will know them, if there should be others, because my name appears. One of these papers is on a single

sheet of paper; the other is on several. I want the one on the single sheet. The other doesn't matter. But if you should be in any doubt whatever, bring them both. All set?"

He watched Simmins depart like an army with banners.

"Funny little beggar," said he. "Full of romance and drama suppressed under his correct butler manner. Kind of pathetic, I think."

"He is so unreliable," doubted Burton.

"In little matters. In this case, for personal reasons, he will be faithful to the limit. I know the type."

And then Simmins was dismissed from the scene, and matters were taken up at the point of interruption. They would not interest us. At least they interested Rapscallion so little that after a time he deserted them for camp; and Rapscallion is a very intelligent dog.

CHAPTER XX

THE campaign of dissembling went off with a bang. Grimstead's hostility melted easily. The impact of Davenport's identity was tremendous. Like many practical men who have done really big things, Grimstead had an almost superstitious respect for the man who writes. He had read and liked some of Davenport's books. So far, so good. Then they got him with the second barrel. The engagement finished him. In his knockabout life most of the conventional had been rubbed off, so he reacted more quickly than would have his wife, had she been alive. It was sudden, but Grimstead was himself accustomed to doing things suddenly. It was unexpected, but in Grimstead's life the unexpected so often happened that it had ended by losing effect. It upset certain plans as to Gardiner; but those plans seemed to have a good many missing cylinders, anyhow. Davenport was an excellent match, he was a manly chap, and—if Grimstead could arrange it—he was going to be immensely wealthy, and he was not Willie Smeed. Of course he had a lot of damn-fool notions, but Grimstead had a good deal of Simmins' idea

there; an author was supposed to be eccentric. What as to hats or ideas in an ordinary citizen would be plain impossibilities, in an author were pleasing idiosyncrasies. The causes of dissension were not alluded to. In fact things went so well that Burton and Larry could not forbear exchanging a glance of congratulation.

Gardiner, as usual, stayed unobtrusively in the background. The loss of his chance with Burton, it must be confessed, affected him very little. He would have married that young lady, had the cards happened to fall that way, and would have been proud of her as an adequate head to his household, and fond of her as an attractive woman; but his real satisfaction with the arrangement would have sprung from his added business opportunities. Now that the latter seemed to be in his hands anyway, he was rather relieved than otherwise that they had come without feminine complications. Indeed, he went even further, and reflected with satisfaction on what he had seen of Burton. This puppy, Davenport, didn't know yet what he was up against. Little wildcat!

Supper passed jovially enough. The camp fire was lighted. Then Grimstead caused the hearts of three of the party to skip a beat.

"Simmins," he commanded, "when you get through those dishes I'll give you my coat to

clean up a little; it's got an ungodly fish smell about it."

As he spoke he took off the garment and hung it on a stub, replacing it with a sweater. He removed nothing from the pockets, and all three of the conspirators could distinctly make out a corner of the bill fold showing from the inside pocket.

Simmins went on with the dishes, but his hands trembled so with excitement and eagerness to be done that the dishpan clattered like a milk wagon. In ten minutes, however, the job was finished. He dried his hands, picked up the coat, and with it started toward the creek.

"Hey, Simmins!" called Grimstead after him. "Where you going? I don't want that thing *washed!*"

"No, sir; of course not, sir. Merely a trifle of sponging, fresh running water, you know, sir," stammered Simmins at a loss.

"Well, go ahead. But there's some things in the pockets; look out you don't lose them. There's a tobacco pouch and a note book in the side pocket, and my pocketbook in the inside pocket."

"Never fear, sir; I'll take the best of care," chattered Simmins, beating a hasty retreat.

"You're not afraid to trust him with a pocketbook?" Larry ventured to suggest.

Grimstead laughed.

"I wouldn't trust him with my roll," he agreed, "nor any other servant. Simmins is as honest as the average when he hasn't been gambling, and can get his share of cigars and booze. But that pocketbook contains nothing but papers; and they can all be replaced. There's nothing there to interest Simmins."

Burton and Larry exchanged another glance. It was almost too good to be true. The stars in their courses were fighting for them.

After ten minutes Simmins glided unobtrusively into the firelight and hung the coat again on the stub.

"Here," Grimstead commanded at once, "bring me that pocketbook out of the inside pocket."

A bolt from heaven could not have crumpled Simmins' interior economy as did that order. For a moment his limbs refused to work; but at last, after some fumbling, he succeeded in extracting the pocketbook and bringing it to his master. Contrary to expectation, Grimstead did not open it. He examined Simmins curiously.

"You're trembling like a leaf," he said. "What's the matter with you?"

Simmins muttered something about its being chilly by the stream.

"Well, get up to the fire!" commanded Grimstead impatiently. He looked at the pocketbook in his hands as though perplexed.

"I'll lose that confounded thing yet," he grumbled. "It's too long for that pocket, and some day when I stoop over it's going to fall out plunk into the stream. Simmins, bring me my small leather kit bag."

He opened the kit bag, burrowed down to the bottom, and tucked the bill book beneath a flap.

"There! She'll stick safe enough there until we go. Take it back, Simmins."

"Yes, sir," said Simmins, "and if there is nothing more, sir, I ask permission to return to my camp to turn in."

"Well, take a drink before you go," offered Grimstead. "Here's the key. Your teeth are chattering."

Simmins gratefully swallowed the whiskey—which, however, Grimstead prepared—returned the key and disappeared.

Larry arose to his feet.

"Poor old Simmins," he laughed. "The strenuous life seems too much for him. I think I'll just step down to the car and see whether he remembered to attend to the lubrication. Come along, Burton? Fine moon coming up shortly."

She arose with an alacrity that made Grimstead laugh. Gardiner, too, stirred.

"Sit still, Ross," said Grimstead; "don't you know better than to act gooseberry?"

Gardiner looked his enquiry.

"Hang the engine," Grimstead told him in low tones aside. "Stay here."

The two young people hastened down the meadow. Simmins was waiting for them.

"Here, sir; here it is," he burst out, thrusting a paper into Larry's hands. "I never was in such a funk in my life! If he had suspected me of rifling his pocketbook he would have killed me on the spot, I do believe. And what is to happen when he discovers his loss, sir, I cannot for the life of me imagine."

"Nothing. Don't worry, Simmins. If he finds it out, I will take the blame. But I don't think he will look for it until we leave here."

"I sincerely hope not, sir."

"And you have acted very nobly in this matter, Simmins. Neither Miss Burton nor myself will ever forget it."

"Indeed we shall not, Simmins," added Burton; "you are a true knight!"

Simmins retired, his heart glowing. As the moments had passed and still no explosion had come from the main camp, he had lost little by little his deadly fear. He crawled between the blankets at last with another drama full-fledged and ready to take wing. It was cast into a dis-

tant future. Simmins appeared in white wig and old-man make-up. There were two or three or four—number indeterminate—golden-haired prattlers gathered about his knee. He was answering their clamouring demand to retell for the hundredth time how forty years agone, come Michaelmas, he had saved the happiness of their grandparents—exact details would await inspiration and development.

The two young people made their way to the bank of the little stream, where they would be screened from the camp. There Larry lighted a match and cast a hasty glance of inspection at the document.

"It's all right," he assured Burton relievedly. "This is it! Blessed be Simmins!"

He tore it into small pieces and cast them into the current.

"I feel as though the weight of worlds had been lifted!" he cried.

"It does seem as though some one or something was helping us," said Burton soberly. "I think that we should be very thankful that things came about so easily."

CHAPTER XXI

THE moment the young people were out of hearing Grimstead turned on Gardiner with an almost savage intensity of manner.

"Listen here, Ross," he said rapidly. "The time has come for action, and we must get busy. Things are at touch and go with us and the stakes are the biggest ever played."

Gardiner looked at him blankly.

"Never mind figuring it out. Listen to me, and take your orders. This man Davenport is a fool, but he has brains. It was perfectly evident that if it did not occur to him immediately, the thought would soon suggest itself that if he could once get hold of the agreement he had signed, he could tell us to go whistle."

"But since he and Miss Burton—"

"Poppycock! Do you think it reasonable he'd change his attitude inside of an hour? Do you think that type of fanaticism ever becomes reasonable? Even if Burton were to use all her influence she could not have changed him that soon. It was too easy; much too easy."

"Then why—"

"A blind. It wouldn't fool a mudhen, let

alone a wise old coot like me. Between the time he went away too mad to spit and the time he came back here, something happened. What?"

"He and Miss Burton—" repeated Gardiner.

"Little or nothing to do with the main issue. What happened was that the idea of the agreement had come to him. He had made up his mind to get it."

Grimstead puffed on his characteristic cigar.

"I'm an old bird; I can put two and two together. The first thing to try was obviously to get hold of it peaceably, by stealing it. If that didn't work, he was going to get it somehow, if he had to hold us up or sandbag us."

Gardiner whistled incredulously.

"No; I haven't been going to the movies too much," disclaimed Grimstead. "I know the type. He's a fanatic, and the most dangerous kind. I'm no alarmist, and I'm no coward; but I know enough to face facts and discount them. I watched that young man very closely when I was telling him where to get off a while back. His mind is set; just as mine is set. He'd commit murder before he'd give in."

Gardiner shook his head.

"That's pretty steep!" he commented.

"It's steep; but it's true. And he's the more dangerous because he's acting from conviction, and not because he is fighting mad. I don't want

to be too serious, but there's no use dodging the fact that here we are with something in our possession that some one else wants badly enough to commit a crime to get. I'm not saying this as an alarmist; I want merely to have it understood that the situation is serious."

Gardiner was excited.

"Get him before he gets us!" he suggested.

"I began to take my measures at once," Grimstead went on. "Obviously if the first thing he would try would be theft, then we must not make theft seem impossible. Every one in this party saw me put the contract and the agreement in my bill fold, and knew that I carried my papers there. He'd try first of all to steal the bill fold. So I made it easy for him."

Grimstead raised his hand to prevent interruption.

"That's why I took off my coat, and why I told Simmins to clean it."

"Did you think that Simmins—?"

"Not at that time. But I figured that if I was correct in my reasoning—and there was always a faint chance this change of heart might be real, remember—Davenport would begin to manœuvre to get hold of the coat or near it."

"A test," murmured Gardiner.

"Precisely. Well, when he did not, I began to think I might be wrong. Then Simmins came

back scared as a rabbit, and I realised he was in it. I'll settle with him later!"

"But the agreement—"

"Was not there, of course. I substituted the carbon copy."

"They'll detect the difference; it isn't signed."

"I signed it for him," grinned the elder man. "It isn't a very good forgery, but all he'll do to-night will be to examine it with a match to see if it's what he wants. I have the flashlight here. To-morrow morning he'll get onto it, of course."

"Clever work, chief," cried Gardiner; then after a moment, "But I don't see that it gets us far."

"It gets us until morning. And it corroborates my suspicions.

"Now listen carefully, Ross," continued Grimstead, "for this is what you must do. You've got to get out of here, and you've got to take this agreement with you to the nearest recorder's, and get it entered. That means you start to-night; just as soon as everybody has turned in."

Gardiner nodded.

"So far, so good. But there's another thing. This man is absolutely capable of lying down on us, no matter what agreements we may have."

"What do you mean?"

"Refuse his formula."

"But you can ruin him."

"He'll stand that. He'll stand for anything now he's got his head set. That's the sort they used to use the thumb rack on without much success."

"I'll bet after he's had a good dose for a little while he'll—" began Gardiner confidently.

"You're wrong. Don't argue. I know what I am talking about."

"All right; what's your plan? I see you've got one."

"Of course I have one. What do you think I've gone this far for?" said Grimstead impatiently. "But I want to ask you one question first: could you analyse this battery, if you had it, and reproduce the formula?"

"Certainly, if what he says is true, that the plates are a simple alloy, and there is no further secret. It will only be necessary to analyse them, measure their exact proportions, determine their specific gravity, and observe carefully any peculiarities of their shape and position."

"Remember, their distance from each other is important."

"That, of course. I see your idea. We are to steal the battery."

"That's it."

"It must weigh forty pounds," objected Gardiner. "Do we hide it out somewhere?"

"No, you'll drive it out. The roads will carry you; I've been watching them. Put the battery back in that rattletrap of his and drive it out."

Gardiner pondered.

"When we stop that self-starter it will be noticed," he objected, "and there'll be a lot of noise getting away. Simmins sleeps right next door. What do I do with him?"

"Simmins is already taken care of," said the Pirate Chief calmly. "He will continue to sleep. That drink I gave him will fix that."

"Doped?" surmised Gardiner.

"Just that. Morphine from the medicine case. And we'll feed Davenport a little of the same."

"Chief, you're a wonder! You think of everything!" cried Gardiner admiringly. "I'd suggest you tie him up after he goes under or he'll likely raise hell when he comes to."

"I expect to," said Grimstead. "Look out; here they come! You understand your job, and remember it's the biggest stake in the world!"

CHAPTER XXII

NOW in this microcosm amid the redwoods all the elements of the laboratory experiment were present and had acted. The solution had precipitated; the crystals had formed. From an average group of people this Pressure had been lifted, and the reactions could be examined. With the results our great Invisible Intelligences were not content. New impetuses had been born, commensurate with new desires, that fully equalled those set in motion by the old Pressure, to be sure; but they were in the main destructive. Greed, the ruthless use of power, revenge, lying, anger, even the possibility of murder, had been unloosed among these peaceful trees. The original impulses of construction had been overwhelmed.

The results of premature lifting of any pressure that has been useful in generating desire are always those of degeneration and decay. Men who know no hunger stir not from beneath the breadfruit tree.

So here the great Invisible Intelligences knew that the time was not yet.

CHAPTER XXIII

EVENTS ran smoothly along the plan laid out for them by the Pirate Chief. Burton and Davenport returned shortly to the campfire. At a suitable time a night-cap was proposed and drunk. Soon after, with Burton in her tent and Davenport deep in stupor, the conspirators had the place to themselves. When the light of Burton's tent had been for some time replaced with a silhouette of blackness, Gardiner arose, hunted out his overcoat, buttoned the agreement on his inside pocket, shook hands with Grimstead, and took his departure down the meadow. He carried the pocket flashlight, and by its aid he soon disconnected the self-starter. Silence rushed in upon the dying clatter as into a vacuum. Gardiner paused long enough to look in on Simmins. That worthy had not stirred.

It was the work of but a few moments more to reinstall the battery in the other car, as it was an affair only of four bolts and two wire connections. Gardiner turned the light switch. Immediately the long pencils of the headlights pierced the darkness. By the dashlights he studied and mastered the control. Then, after

storing his valise under the rear deck, he stepped aboard and threw over the lever. The car moved slowly ahead on the corduroy!

Gardiner drove very slowly and carefully, easing her over the inequalities of the improvised road. Even at that it seemed to him that the whole glade was filled with enough rattles, squeaks, impacts and hoarse, tinny vibrations to awaken the dead. As a matter of fact there was very little noise, all things considered, and Grimstead, seated before the dying fire, nodded with satisfaction as he heard the faint sounds of progress.

The passage across the new laid poles was successfully accomplished, and the tortuous way through the brush. Once on the soft damp road Gardiner relaxed and leaned back. As there had been no traffic while the mud was in the semi-liquid state, there were now no ruts. A moment's trial convinced him that the surface would bear. He settled down comfortably. Ahead the shafts of light threw into hard, theatrical prominence the trunks of trees, the tracery of leaves, the lacery of bracken and brush. These were flat, on one plane, as though cut from cardboard. Then one by one they passed into the penumbra on either side, and glided by as dim ghosts. The road wound and twisted, rose and fell, and the light shafts swept from right to left and up

and down to reveal momentarily new things. An owl, surprised by the sudden glare, flapped heavily across.

Gardiner experimented cautiously with the control. The mechanism was wonderfully responsive. He found the engine much more flexible than any gasoline car he had ever driven. For a few minutes he amused himself bringing it almost to a stop, and then picking up smoothly and positively by merely opening the throttle. The throttle was very sensitive. Under its impulse, when Gardiner for the first time stepped on it incautiously, the light car almost jumped from under him.

The mechanism was silent except for a faint hum of the differential gear, although, of course, there were plenty of body squeaks and rattles. This absence of the regular busy rhythm of the gasoline motor made it extremely difficult to estimate speed. Gardiner's glance at the speedometer dial showed him a pace he had not realised. However, the car itself was so light that he found it could be checked easily by the brakes. Gardiner settled down to the sheer pleasure of driving as fast as his skill would permit. He was a good driver, and he understood well how to pick up on the straightaways and just how much to check at the curves. And he was a safe driver, as genuine skill is usually safe.

Now we begin to see the great, sweeping curve of events, the curve that had seemed to us a straight line.

For Gardiner was not alone in the car. No less a personage than Punketty-Snivvles occupied the seat next him, though the Second in Command was as yet ignorant of that fact.

Punketty-Snivvles did not belong there. He had fallen from his erstwhile high estate of being tucked in by mistress in a pink-lined basket; but he had not yet arrived at the degradation of caring for himself. Simmins had lately done the tuck in. None better than Punketty-Snivvles knew this was a come-down; but he accepted it, and placed against it the belief that he was now a Rough Rude Dog, like Rapscallion. But tonight Simmins, through no fault of his own, had passed out, and our hero, sub-one, had missed his usual attention. To be sure there the basket stood, and Punketty-Snivvles could quite well have hopped into it. But his sense of the proprieties was outraged, and he simply would not do it! He much preferred to be uncomfortable and retain the right to have his feelings hurt. So he climbed into the seat of the little car where his protective coloration had concealed him from Gardiner's notice.

The obvious thing to have done in so delicate a situation was to have called attention to him-

self; but Punketty-Snivvles was exasperated beyond obedience to convention. He preferred to sulk and glower and brood on his wrongs. It must be recalled to your mind that Gardiner had cuffed Punketty-Snivvles soundly when that personage had been left in his charge. You remember I asked you to file that away for future reference. So now he crouched in his place, and fixed his beady eyes in malevolence on his enemy, and worked up a fine big Teutonic hate.

The road wound between the great redwoods, steadily descending. It had no abrupt curves, but one could never see more than a hundred feet or so ahead. As the bottom of the declivity was neared the noise of another, and evidently larger stream could be heard, flowing at the bottom of the cañon. Gardiner flashed around a last corner to see ahead of him a straight bridge. The lights showed him its approach on a slight rise, and that it was built on a high trestle. Then the nose of the car touched the slight rise and the lights lifted. At the same instant Punketty-Snivvles, whose hate had worked up to the point of action, reached out and bit Gardiner in the wrist!

Gardiner, who had not known of the dog's presence, jumped in surprise and alarm. The car swerved, but he was too cool a driver to permit it to leave the road. However, for three sec-

onds his attention was deflected, and that time was sufficient to shoot the car onto the planking of the bridge. Gardiner saw all this with the corner of his eye and steered straight and true, while at the same time his direct vision was occupied in identifying the cowering little dog. Then he looked back to the front. Before him yawned an abyss. The bridge had been carried away by the flood.

Even while he reached for the brake his brain photographed clearly the jagged edges of the bridge, the opposite bank picked out clearly by the lights, and dimly far below a white and phosphorescent tumble of waters hastening to the sea. The brakes checked the momentum almost but not quite enough. The car slowed, ran off the edge, seemed for an instant to hover right side up like a bird. Then down it plunged and the foaming, turbulent waters seized it and bore it shouting away.

CHAPTER XXIV

BY the campfire Grimstead strained his ears to catch the last sounds of departure. Things were going very well. They always did go well, he had found, when directed masterfully. Burton, as he had foreseen, did not stir in her tent. She was young and slept soundly, especially in the first part of the night. After a while he threw away his cigar, stretched and arose. First he leaned over Davenport for a moment, listening to his rather stertorous breathing. Then he sauntered to the big redwood at whose base the kitchen had been made. Here he deliberately unknotted a short piece of line that had been used to suspend a shading bit of canvas, and with it returned toward the sleeper. He was thoroughly satisfied, and was humming a little tune.

In his brief absence another had added himself to the scene. Rapscallion had continued to share the tent with Burton. Now, however, urged by some vague restlessness, some telepathic uneasiness, some trickle from the current searching out a channel of his doggy mind, he had deserted the warm and grateful nest and had come forth to sit by his master.

Grimstead paid him no attention; but, cord in hand, advanced upon the sleeper. Now the queer thing happened. Rapscallion was the most friendly of dogs, ever polite and eager, whose experiences with humans had always been courteous. Also he was, of course, thoroughly familiar with Grimstead. Now, however, he arose to stiff legs, his eyes blazing, the coarse hair of his back and neck erect, his lips snarled back. Grimstead paused.

"Here, Rap, you old fool!" he admonished in a low voice. "What ails you?"

And again stepped forward.

Instantly Rapscallion uttered two sharp and challenging barks.

The sleeper did not stir; no sound came from the tent. Grimstead stepped forward again.

Now Rapscallion did not know what it was all about. Only his simple dog mind had received the impression that, unexplainedly and for the first time, the proximity of this large human meant trouble to Master; and his simple dog code told him to stick tight, say as much as he could about it, and in extremity to do his utmost. If he had a private thought apart, which is improbable, it was a fleeting one of despair at relative sizes and powers; but it did not affect his course of conduct. He began again to bark rapidly and warningly. As Grimstead continued

to advance he deployed all his available horrific camouflage to the job of concealing or distracting attention from his size and weakness; he added an under-growl in his throat; he snarled back his lips to show all his teeth; he threw in a sharp staccato to his remarks; with each bark he bobbed forward and back a few inches as though propelled by a spring. These things impressed Grimstead just so far as to cause him to pick up a heavy, club-shaped billet of wood, a weapon that plainly outgunned the armament of a little red-dog who fought at fifteen pounds!

At this moment Burton appeared from the tent.

"Dad," she cried, "what are you doing with that club and that rope? I'll keep him quiet!"

Her first sleepy thought was that the dog's barking had awakened Grimstead and exasperated him to the point of canicide. As her mind cleared and focussed, however, her eyes widened with terror. Davenport's immobility amid all this noise, Grimstead's day attire; what did it mean? She dashed forward to the young man and, undeterred by Rapscallion, fell on her knees at his side.

"What have you done? What have you done?" she cried, terror-stricken.

"Nothing—nothing at all—he's perfectly all right!" cried Grimstead, whose one idea was to

reassure her before she lost control of herself. "He's not hurt. He'll be as well as ever in the morning."

But by this time Burton had assured herself that he was living and unhurt, and she rose slowly to her feet. Her brow was puckered in thought.

"You've drugged him," she decided at last. She pondered for a moment more, then raised her head.

"The engine has stopped—you have stolen the car!" she cried in sudden enlightenment. A deep scorn rose to the surface of her eyes. "And now you were going to tie him! You're afraid of what he might do!"

On the passing of the danger of hysterics Grimstead became himself again. This was too big a matter to permit of sentiment. He spoke brusquely.

"This is not woman's business, Burton," said he, "and you must not interfere. No harm is intended to your young man. Indeed I am saving him from himself; and in the future he will thank me for making him a rich man instead of permitting him to ruin himself by foolishness."

"He will never thank you; and I will never forgive you!" she cried passionately.

He shrugged his shoulders. Women always

got over these things. Still a slight change in minor tactics seemed desirable. It would no longer be possible or desirable to restrain the young man by force. There remained then for Grimstead himself to withdraw until the first passions at discovery should simmer down nearer common sense. He turned aside and picked up his blankets.

"I'll leave him to you," he told Burton. "Try to get some common sense into him—if it's possible. But be sure to tell him one thing: that his interests are going to be scrupulously protected. He'll get every cent that is coming to him."

He disappeared down the meadow. Burton looked after him, her bosom heaving with emotions too deep for reply. Then in a passion of mingled loyalty and anger she fell on her knees again beside the unconscious young man.

Rapscallion yawned and stretched. The trouble, whatever it was, seemed to be happily over. After a moment he wandered carelessly away, as though on an aimless saunter. Once out of sight, however, he pattered rapidly into the tent, leaped upon Burton's cot and curled himself into a luxurious ball.

CHAPTER XXV

NOTHING further happened now until shortly after sunrise the next morning. Then Burton, who had fallen into an uneasy slumber after some hours of futile watching to see that dear Larry did not die of an overdose without her knowing it, shivered and awoke. For a moment she stared about her vacantly. Then recollection too awoke, and she reached out to shake Davenport by the shoulder. The young man continued to sleep, but he half roused himself, and he turned and muttered before settling himself again. This was distinctly encouraging. At least the first deadening effects of the morphine must have worked themselves off. Burton tried again, and yet again, until at length he opened a sleepy eye. The first expression of the said eye was vacant, but when recognition entered, its owner sat up broad awake.

"What is it, dear?" he cried. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm all right," she assured him, "but I've something to tell you. Wake up first."

He made a powerful effort for control of his faculties.

"Lord, I've got a head!" he confessed. "And all on one little drink! I can't think!" He shook the said head gingerly from side to side, then took it in his hands.

"I'm going now to get dressed," she told him. "You'd better go down to the creek and try cold water."

"Where's your father?" he enquired, looking around.

"That's part of it. Get dressed quickly. Hurry!"

She disappeared into the tent whence came the sound of a light body hitting the ground, succeeded by the sight of Rapscallion sauntering forth, trying, with only partial success, to look like a dog who had not slept in a bed.

Larry drew on his clothes and stumbled to the creek, where the cold water soon removed the last effects of the narcotic. He returned to camp to find Burton awaiting him. Her story did not take long in the telling. Davenport listened attentively, with but a single comment, but the weathered red of his face darkened, and the boyishness drained from his eyes, leaving them steely. The one comment came when Burton described Rapscallion's brave stand.

"It's as well he slept out," said Davenport grimly, his hand groping for the red-dog's head.

The narrative finished, he rose to his feet,

fumbled in his pack, drew forth a revolver and holster, which he strapped to his belt.

"What are you going to do?" she asked anxiously.

"I'm going to follow the car."

"You can't hope to catch it afoot!"

"The chance is very slim," he acknowledged, "but it's the only chance, and it should be taken. Luck might play with us. The car might get stalled. Who knows? And in any case I've got to get on the wires to the lawyers right away."

He was methodically bestowing small necessaries in a rucksack.

"Please have Simmins take care of my other things," he requested. "Good-bye, dear."

He opened his arms and she crept into them. They clung together for a moment.

"Be careful," she begged. "You must come back to me. Don't—don't be rash, will you?"

He laughed.

"You mean the gun? No; I'm not going forth to slay. That's just in the remote case I need a convincing argument. This is a lawyer game now, and a game of get there first." He laughed again. "And, dearest, we're going to lick them! I have a hunch! It just came to me with the most overpowering force. It's coming out all right!"

He kissed her again and strode away.

"Come back to me soon!" she called after him.

"The soonest ever!" he cried back.

After his departure Burton, whose education had been coming on, made herself some coffee. About two hours later Simmins appeared, very apologetic over his tardiness, but more astonished at the disappearance of personnel and materiel. The absence of the little car Burton had expected; but she was at first puzzled to hear that the extra cooking utensils, which had been taken to the lower camp for the use of the watchers in making their breakfast, had disappeared; as also a small quantity of provisions. This did not impress Simmins much, for he thought naturally that whoever had taken the car must also have carried off the supplies; but Burton knew better. Then enlightenment caused her lips to curve in a slightly scornful smile. The Pirate Chief, of course! He had taken not only his blankets, but his provision. He was hiding out, and Burton had a shrewd suspicion that he would continue hiding out. Even a Pirate Chief has, if not tender feelings, at least love of mental ease; and Burton realised that even this stern parent might be just as well satisfied if he did not have to face his child while things were too fresh in her mind!

"Simmins, see if Mr. Grimstead's fishing tackle

is here," she ordered at this stage in her reasoning.

Simmins' report that the fishing tackle had been taken confirmed her opinion.

"You and I will probably have to wait here some days," she interrupted Simmins' excited conjectures. "Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Davenport have gone away in the car, probably to get help or on business. Father has undoubtedly gone for a day or two's fishing down stream; I believe he mentioned it."

She spoke with elaborate appearance of indifference. But for once Simmins broke through of his own volition.

"Oh, Miss!" he implored. "Do not longer keep me in the dark. I know well that dark deeds are afoot. Can you not accept me as a faithful servitor of your interests and confide in me the truth?"

Simmins was as well satisfied with the diction and delivery of that speech as with anything he had ever done. The substitution of "proud beauty" for "Miss" would have made it perfect; but the exigencies of his audience precluded that. You have, to some extent, to give the public what it wants.

The appeal, however, was genuine and irresistible. While they cooked breakfast the two talked eagerly. The situation was thrilling, and

they young. They thrilled, and speculated, and wondered, and worked each other up mutually to a high state of romance. Simmins' dramatic sense soared. He shook his toasting fork, he declaimed, he dropped his veneer and talked natural language. That is, natural language for Simmins; not for you nor me nor anybody else but the splendid heroes of G. P. R. James. Suddenly Burton checked herself and laughed.

"Simmins!" she cried. "I knew you could do it! You've become human!"

CHAPTER XXVI

SHORTLY after noon they were astonished to see Davenport returning. Burton ran to meet him with a cry of mingled gladness and curiosity. He replied curtly. His eye was savage, his lips compressed. She looked at him, then fell silent. As they entered camp she made an imperative gesture to Simmins of warning that he should not speak.

Larry strode to the fireside and threw down the rucksack with a slam, then turned to Burton.

"Well, they've done it now!" he snarled. "I'd like to wring some one's neck."

He looked slowly around, and the innocent Simmins shrank visibly.

"Gone! Completely gone!" he cried. "Not a stick or hide or hair left; and try as I can I can't remember the first thing about it, the very first step!"

Burton stepped to his side.

"Dear, remember we don't know what you are talking about," she said. "Can't you try to tell us what has happened? Did he get away completely?"

Davenport laughed savagely.

"Got away! That's it, got away!" he rejoined. "Got away so far nobody will ever be able to follow and bring the secret back from him! The biggest thing the world has ever seen! Gone!"

She drew him by gentle force to her side on the log. Simmins was watching with wide, awe-stricken eyes.

"Now," she said sensibly, "tell me about it. I can't make head or tail out of such hysterics."

He jerked back as though the word had been a whip with which he had been hit in the face. Which was to Burton an intended and satisfactory reaction.

"I followed the car for six or eight miles to the place the road crossed the Deep Barranca on a trestle. Part of the trestle had been carried out by the flood. Gardiner had driven the car off into the abyss."

"Killed?" cried Burton, horrified.

"Gone; swept away, disappeared completely. The stream is wide and swift and fast. I climbed down, of course, but no trace whatever remained except one seat cushion that had been thrown clear. I followed down the stream on the chance that the car might have stranded; but in that force of water it probably broke to pieces almost at once. It was of very light construction."

"What a tragedy!" cried Burton. "Poor Ross Gardiner!"

Davenport shut his lips grimly and let this pass. After a decent moment or so Burton ventured a comment.

"But there is this to say: the present problem is solved. The agreement is gone, the whole scheme headed off. You can build another battery."

"That's just it!" cried Davenport, his excitement returning. "I'm not sure I can do anything of the sort."

"What do you mean?" she demanded sharply.

"I mean just this," he replied with bitter deliberation; "all my notebooks of formulæ were in that car, every scrap of paper I had in the world that had anything to do with this."

She stared at him, taking this in.

"I was a fool, of course," he went on, "but I wanted to keep things by me."

She was recovering a little.

"You can copy your other battery," she pointed out.

"Other battery?"

"Didn't you say you'd built two?"

"Oh! the first was crude. I used it only a little while. It was dismantled long ago."

"You will work it out again," she comforted. "It may be a slow task, but you'll get it."

He looked at her with something like fright in his eyes.

"I do not know!" he almost whispered. "I thought that at first, and I did not really care very much. But then all at once when I sat down to think about it I discovered that I had not one shred of memory of how to make a start at it. It's gone!"

"But when you get in your workshop—"

"You don't understand; it's *all* gone! I can't even remember what a single one of the metals in my alloys were! And they were common metals, too. I can't recollect whether there was lead in them, or iron, or copper; and yet I know that the metals were some of them as common as that! And as for temperatures and such things—all gone; wiped out!"

She looked at him in slight bewilderment.

"Why, Larry!" she cried. "I hardly know you. It isn't like you to be discouraged. This mood will pass. It is sheer nonsense. Of course you will work it out again, as you did at first. What does it matter if it does take time? You'll get it."

He shook his head.

"No, I'm not a quitter," he disclaimed. "I know it sounds like it. But this has become a certainty to me. It has come to me in the same way that all these other things have come to me. Perhaps it is the last of these beautiful certainties from the current of wisdom. It was given to

me, and now I feel that it has been taken away. I never was more sure of anything in my life."

She stared at him, aghast. A slow conviction was entering her too, a conviction she tried to stifle, an unreasonable conviction that could not be explained. Some mighty and beautiful Vision that had touched them with its presence was unfolding its wings for flight.

"Such things cannot happen!" she cried, all aflame.

He shook his head. In his uplifted face was no discouragement, only the sorrow of regret.

Unnoticed a lank figure had crossed the meadow from the road and now appeared among them.

"Hullo, folks," said he, casting a curious eye about him. "Campin' for fun, or get stuck yere by the storm?"

"Caught by the storm," replied Burton, who had the better command of herself.

The stranger spat carefully out of camp.

"I'm the stage driver between Eureka and Tecolote," he volunteered, "but I don't see no way of gettin' through now. That there redwood tree's got the road blocked for keeps. Say, she must have made some crash when she come down!"

"She did," replied Burton. An idea was form-

ing in her brain. "Are you going back to Eureka?" she enquired.

"Sure. Only place to go."

"Have you got room for two?"

"I got only the U. S. mails aboard. What's the idea?"

"Our car is broken," she explained rapidly. "If you will wait ten minutes, we'll be ready."

"Lots of time," rejoined the stage driver, and sauntered over to engage the excellent Simmins.

"It is the only thing!" she urged Larry, as soon as the other was out of hearing. "Can't you see it is? We cannot stay here. Don't you see it?" she implored.

"I want to get out before he gets back," replied Larry bluntly. "You're right; I'll go."

"I'm going with you," she said steadily.

"What! You cannot do that!"

"You are going to need me; I know," she insisted, "it is part of my wisdom, as you call it."

The hunted, hurt look in his face softened.

"Come," he cried almost exultantly. "There must be people who marry people up here! The world and its power and its troubles can go hang!"

She was at once a-wing, flitting like a bird as she gathered the few things she wanted to take with her, carolling little snatches of song under her breath. In a moment she was ready.

"All aboard!" called Davenport to the stage driver. "Ready when you are."

"Simmins," ordered Burton, "you take care of things. We will send some one out from a garage."

But Simmins, at the thought of being left alone with a marooned and exasperated Pirate Chief, lost all his pose and poise and became thoroughly human.

"Oh, Miss Burton!" he cried. "Don't do that to me! Let me go with you! We can send a man out to-night to Mr. Grimstead; I'll gladly make up a bonus from my own pocket—whatever is necessary. Don't leave me here all alone!"

"Afraid of the woods, Simmins?" asked Larry mischievously.

"Yes, sir," rejoined Simmins with unexampled candour, "I am afraid of the woods; and I am afraid of Mr. Grimstead. Remember, sir, he might at any moment discover that paper is gone —unless Mr. Gardiner had it—I don't know what I am saying, but don't leave me here."

Larry glanced at Burton, who nodded.

"All right; come along," he agreed. "Get your things together."

"They are all together," Simmins assured him fervently, "since morning, sir."

"Well, come on then."

"One moment, sir," begged Simmins.

He produced a pad and pencil and wrote thereon. The finished result he folded and placed in a conspicuous position.

"I don't want to pry; but if that note is to Mr. Grimstead—" suggested Davenport.

"It is only my resignation, sir," replied Simmins, humbly. "It would not be in any way proper for me to leave Mr. Grimstead's employ for another's without offering my resignation; now would it, sir?"

Davenport surveyed the little man kindly.

"Certainly not, Simmins; you are quite right," he answered. "What would you consider the proper procedure for a young lady eloping—" He glanced after Burton to be sure she was out of hearing. "Should she also leave some sort of written communication? And in my own case, as a sort of guest of the place, should I too leave a note? The circumstances, I confess, are unusual; and the conventions in my profession are not so closely studied as in yours."

His voice and face betrayed nothing but the deepest, gravest concern. Simmins, immensely flattered, pondered deeply.

"It is usual, sir, for the young lady to leave a note pinned on her pin-cushion, for the purpose of allaying anxiety over her disappearance. I took the liberty of explaining in my note that

I was leaving to enter your service, sir, and that of Miss Burton; and that it is intended to send a garage man immediately."

"Then you consider a note from Miss Burton unnecessary?"

"Quite, sir," replied Simmins firmly.

"And myself?"

"You, sir, I should have considered rather a partner than a guest."

"You relieve my mind, Simmins," murmured Larry, and hastened to join Burton and the stage driver. She looked at him with pleased surprise.

"Good!" she cried. "You're more like yourself!"

"It's Simmins!" Larry exploded with suppressed laughter. "He's a joy and a jewel and he's untwisted me from all my knots. Dear, never must we lose Simmins! We'll pawn the family jewels before we let him go."

The little party, carrying the few pieces of baggage, and followed solemnly by Rapscallion, crossed the meadow to where waited the stage.

Ten minutes later Grimstead, who had heard the racket made when the long vehicle backed and filled in turning around, came curiously to see what was happening. He found himself alone with the wrecks he had made.

CHAPTER XXVII

ACROSS the episode now slowly the dark curtains closed. A great vision had been given one man; a vision that in its due and proper time will lift from mankind one of its greatest Pressures. But that time had not yet arrived. When thus it too evidently appeared that from the gift would come strife, not freedom, then the great Invisible Intelligences, whose Pressure is the carrying on with wisdom of our little world, in sadness reached forth their hands. From the soul of that man the vision was erased. Of all its breadth and greatness remained only one little thing: an idea for this story. But some time, in the remote future, somewhere, to some soul the vision will come again.

THE END